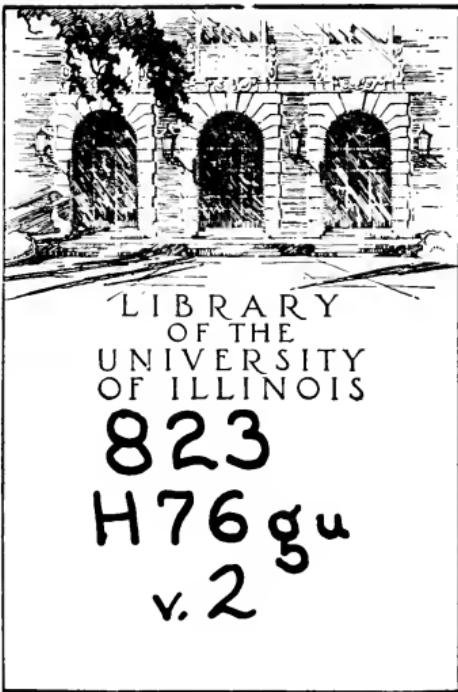
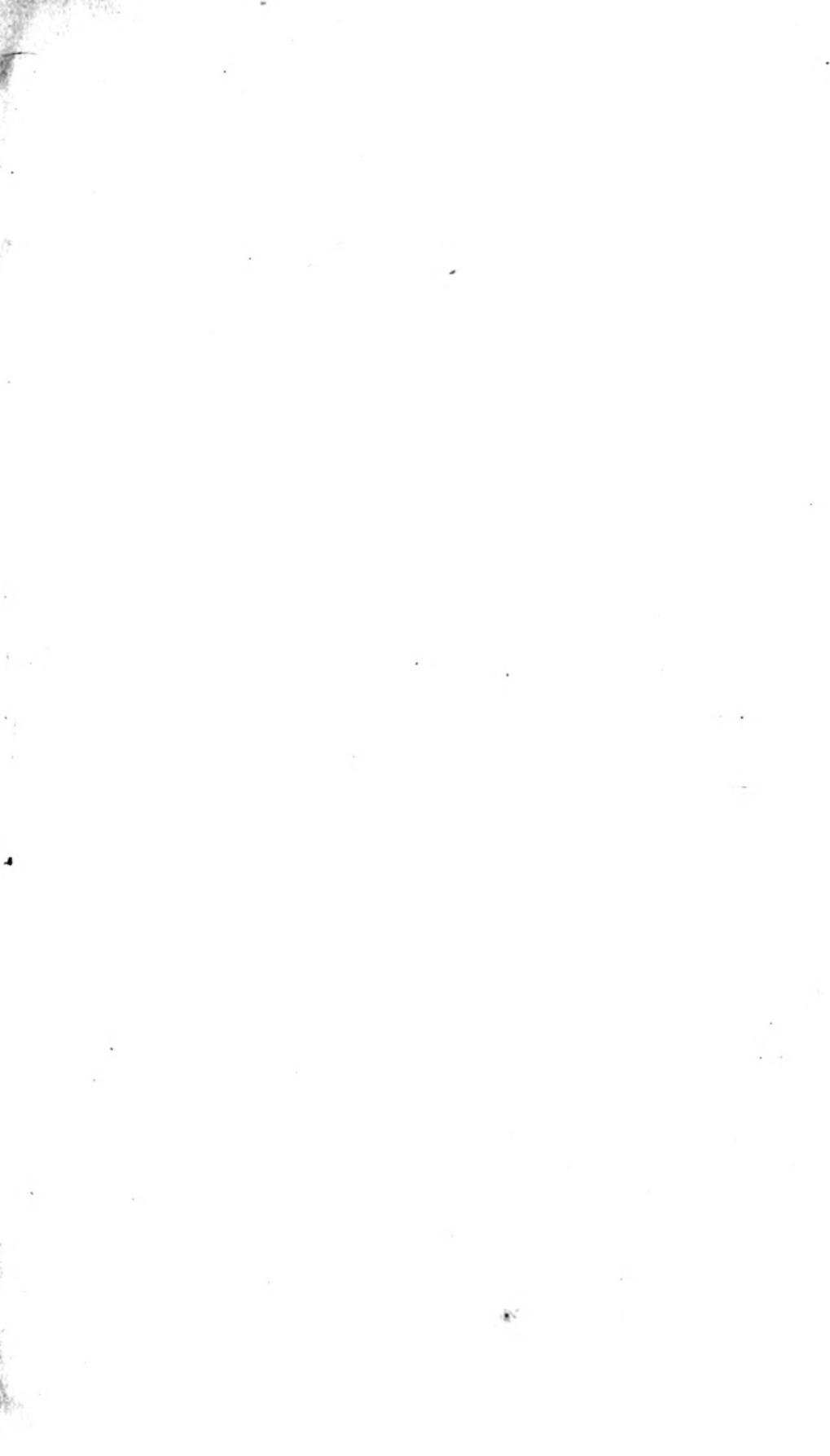


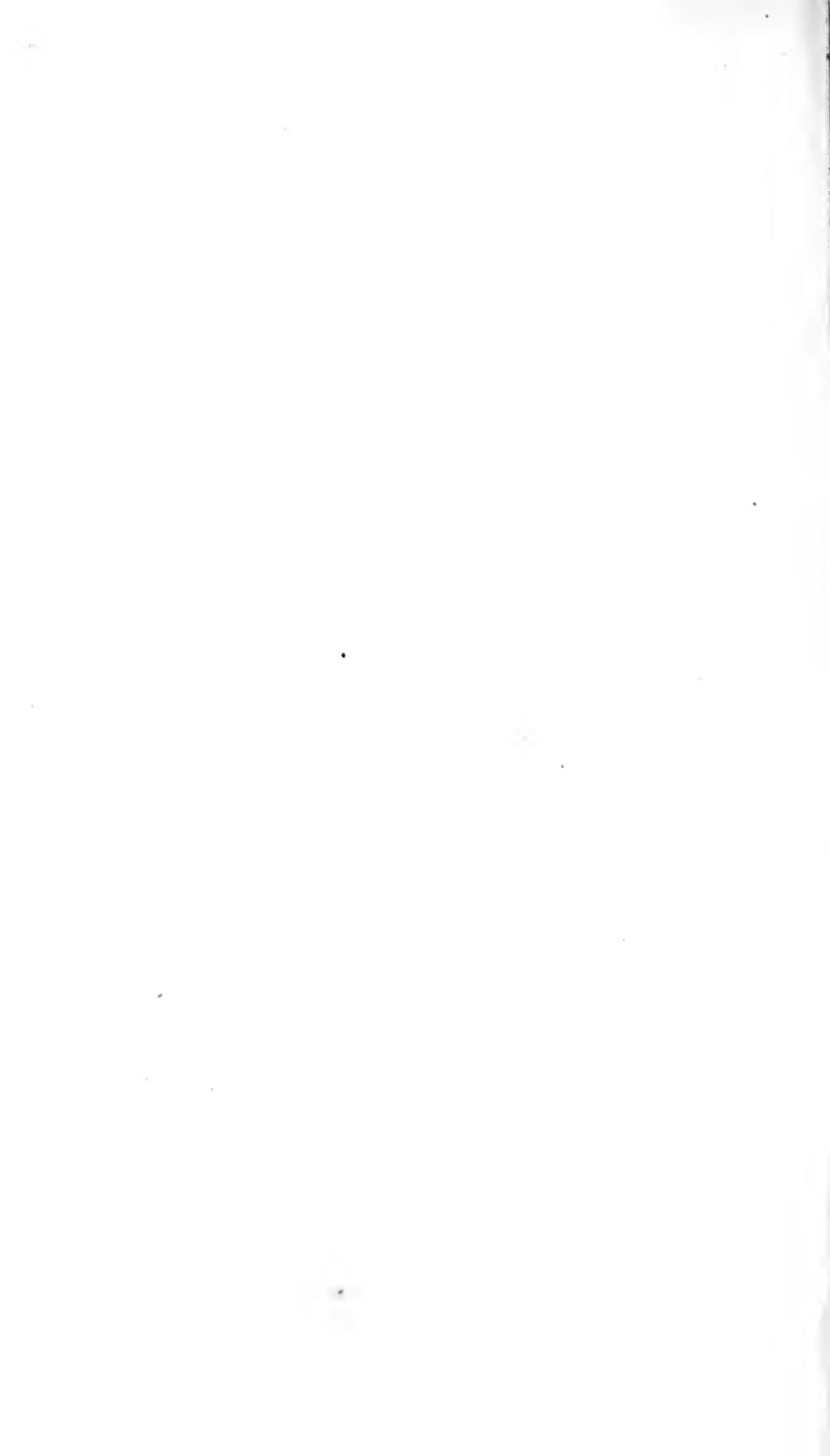
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GURNEY MARRIED:

A SEQUEL TO

GILBERT GURNEY.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "SAYINGS AND DOINGS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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GURNEY MARRIED.

CHAPTER I.

“I HAD no idea,” said Wells, when Daly was out of hearing, “that our entertaining mimic was your redoubtable friend, of whom you have so often spoken: if I had—and I wonder almost that you had not told me—I don’t think I should have asked him here.”

“My motive,” said I, “for not saying anything about him was my desire not to betray him under his disguise; but most certainly I did not expect to find him your guest.”

“The deuce you did not!” said Wells. “Then

he must be rather a sharp hand. He came up to me in the library, told me he had breakfasted with *you*, and that you regretted your engagement to *me*—of which I then knew nothing—because it would keep you from him; and all this he did so plausibly, and so coolly, that he made me understand, without directly saying it, that you wished to dine here instead of at Ashmead, in order to keep the house quiet, and that, moreover, your plan was that I should ask him to meet you.”

“ Well,” said I, “ give him the full credit for his ingenuity, and believe that I was perfectly innocent of any such conspiracy, and never was more surprised in my life than when I found him here.”

“ Never mind,” said Wells; “ I wish we had not such good, or rather bad reasons for driving him away. Gilbert, rely upon it, that boy will not get over it.”

“ I fear not,” said I.

“ We had better prepare poor Harriet for the possibility of his death,” said Wells; “ and, moreover, I am anxious to see her mother. I

have had a very extraordinary communication from the Lieutenant touching his affair with Fanny, of which I do not exactly understand the meaning."

"Come," said I, "let us be going;" and we mechanically proceeded to prepare for our walk to Ashmead, both of us occupied with a variety of feelings of the most unpleasant character.

During the *trajet*, however, Wells imparted to me some particulars of his difficulties; for he was now struggling between an anxiety to promote his daughter's happiness, and a determination to support what he called the dignity of her character.

That Lieutenant Merman was attached to Fanny there could be no doubt,—at least as much attached as an abrupt, iron-nerved man, wholly devoid of delicacy, or that sort of feeling which I hold to be essential to true love, could be; and, although particularly disagreeable to *me*, there could be as little doubt that Miss Fanny Wells was extremely well disposed towards him. The avowed want of fortune on the

part of the young lady exonerated him in her eyes from any imputation of interested motives in his affection, and his implicit belief that his aunt would make him her heir, fully justified his persisting in attentions which he all along proposed to carry to an honourable conclusion.

So far all was well; nobody could find fault, and certainly, least of all, Wells, to whose notions about marriage I have so often referred. The truth was, that when the Lieutenant found that his inheritance was saddled with a condition, he preferred the money with the incumbrance, to subjecting himself to incumbrances without the money.

“But the Lieutenant and his aunt had reckoned without their host. Merman when he had explained the position in which he was placed, by the pertinacious affection of his aunt Miss Maloney, and had, in fact, broken off the affair with Fanny, proceeded to the old lady, the source of all his future prosperity, and was most cordially received; his prompt appearance in answer to

her summons practically evincing his readiness to fall into her arrangement.

“ ‘ Dear Philip,’ ” said his aunt, “ ‘ you will find Millicent Maloney a very charming young woman. I am extremely sorry that you have seen so little of her, but your being quartered in England, and our living in Ireland, have kept you too long apart. My plan of settling you together is not one of to-day, but I had my reasons for not communicating it to you in direct terms before. The moment you told me your intentions of proposing for another young lady, I felt it necessary to open my heart to you.’ ”

“ ‘ I wish,’ said the Lieutenant, ‘ it had so happened that I could have been aware of your views before—for really Miss Wells is a nice girl; and I have got so completely habituated to the ways of her family, that it is painful to myself not to speak of its being rather unfair to *her*, to break off such an engagement. That, however, is’nt much, because I fairly told her father, it would be madness in me to marry her without

adequate means for her support—the wife of a subaltern, with, perhaps, half a dozen children, destined to be stowed away in a bare-walled den in barracks, or cooped up in country quarters in a two-windowed drawing-room over a chandler's shop, ought not to be taken from the quiet comforts of such a house as Blissfold Rectory. If I had the means——'

" 'Ay, ay,' said the aunt, 'but you have not the means, Philip. All I want you to do is to see Millicent—her father was one of the handsomest men that ever stepped; he was, as you know, one of your honourable profession, and Millicent is naturally attached to those who, like yourself, belong to it.'

" 'And her mother?' said Philip—

" Ay, that's the question? "

" 'Her mother,' said the aunt, 'was a young lady of good family—it was a runaway match. I knew her well—intimately—poor girl, she died within a very short time of Millicent's birth, who, consequently, never knew a mother's care.'

Her death happened at a time when I had gone into the country for the benefit of my health ; and I had the melancholy satisfaction of being with her when she breathed her last. Her husband had been ordered abroad about two months before the event, which she survived only five weeks. I promised her to be a mother to her child. I brought the baby home to my father's house when I returned—brought her up carefully—and, when old enough, sent her to school ; and, as you know, when my father died and I went to live in Ireland, she accompanied me, and, in fact, has never left me since.'

" 'Your kindness has been remarkable,' said Philip, making a sort of sniff with his nose, which sounded more significant than genteel.

" 'Is it not natural, then,' said his aunt, 'that, meaning to leave everything I have to those most dear to me, I should wish you, who have a natural claim upon me, to unite yourself to her to whom I am so much attached ? Thus the amount of what I leave would be jointly

yours, and I should see you settled and happy before I quitted this transitory life.'

" ' Nobody would venture to impugn your kind intentions,' said the Lieutenant; ' all I presume to complain of is my not having been earlier made acquainted with them—her father——'

" ' Oh,' said Philip's aunt, ' her father never returned to England.—He died in the West Indies in half a year after his departure.'

" ' And is Miss Maloney now here ?' said Philip, who saw lying about the room, harp-strings, and colour-boxes, and work-boxes, and odd volumes of novels, a song or two, some netting, and knotting, and knitting needles, and sundry other similar indications of the presence of a young accomplished female.

" ' To be sure she is,' said the aunt; ' I only wanted to put you *au fait* before I introduced you to her—here is her picture, and an excellent likeness too.'

" Philip looked at the miniature which she proffered, and beheld a countenance full of ani-

mated expression, with a pair of eloquent eyes, and a witching smile upon the lips, which, taken in conjunction with a figure that, as far as it went in the picture, was perfectly symmetrical, instantly superseded the less classical beauties of the deserted Fanny Wells in the mind of the Lieutenant.

“ ‘ Gad,’ said the Lieutenant, ‘ this is very lovely, though ! But I tell you what, aunt—don’t suppose I mean to flatter you—but upon my life there is something in the expression of the mouth that reminds me very much of *you*.’

“ ‘ ME !’ exclaimed the Aunt: ‘ what a notion ! Compare *me*, at forty-one, with that blooming creature of nineteen ! Philip, Philip, Philip, you are dreaming. No, no ! I never was so handsome as that. No, she takes after her father more than after her mother.’

“ ‘ If Miss Melecent——’

“ ‘ Millicent, my dear Philip,’ said the Aunt.

“ ‘ I never know,’ said Philip, ‘ how to pronounce that name.’

“ ‘ Why,’ said the aunt, who was a wag in *her*

line, ‘in the present case you may pronounce it either way—

‘ You may call her Millicent on account of her money,
Or Mellecent, because she’s as sweet as honey.

There’s for you ! ’

“ ‘ I am delighted to see you in such spirits, Aunt,’ said the Lieutenant; ‘ now tell me when am I to be presented ? ’

“ ‘ As soon as you have dressed for dinner,’ said the Aunt. ‘ First impressions go a great way, and I want her to like you at once.’

“ As for myself, if I had been there I should speedily have abandoned all hopes of success by a *coup de main*. Merman was decidedly no beauty, and if he were destined to win a heart it must be by the exercise of that most perilous of all man’s members, the tongue: however, the Lieutenant did not think so, and, accordingly, acting upon the suggestion of his worthy relation, who had proved herself so much attached to him, and so careful of his interests, bestowed a double share of pains upon the completion of his toilette.

“ Miss Pennefather—or, as she was beginning to call herself, *Mrs.* Pennefather—dined early—five o’clock—and in the summer a drive or a stroll in the cool of the evening was the order of the day. As it was, and while stern winter bound fair Nature in his icy chains, Millicent would endeavour to make the fire-side agreeable—she would sing to him—for she sang divinely. She would shew him her drawings, for she drew beautifully, and then at some more genial season when—

“ The sun had chased the mountain snow,
And kindly loosed the frozen soil,”

she would stroll with him by the banks of the beautiful river which rolled its silver tide under the terrace at the end of the flower-garden, and point out to him the beauties of the verdant valley which lay at their feet. All this, it must be confessed, was well calculated to eradicate from his memory the less showy qualifications of my poor sister-in-law, and teach him to forget the humbler laurel walks of hospitable Blissfold.

“ Within a few minutes of five, the Lieutenant paraded himself in the drawing-room of Mrs.

Pennefather's perfect Paradise, at the end of which was a large looking-glass, in the which the Lieutenant kept continually gazing at himself, improving all his good points; twisting his hair into curl, settling his neckcloth, arranging his waistcoat, and all the rest of it, until his dear relation made her appearance, looking, it must be confessed, exceedingly handsome, and evidently not dressed as a foil for her jewel of a niece.

" 'I thought,' said she, 'we should be better without strangers to-day; so we shall be quite alone.'

" 'So much the more agreeable,' said the Lieutenant.

" 'Dinner is on the table,' said the butler.

" 'Good news,' said the Lieutenant.

" 'Does Miss Maloney know we are waiting?' said Miss Pennefather.

" 'I'll enquire, Madam,' said the man, and retired.

" 'Come, Philip,' said the Aunt, 'we are at home, and I hope you feel we are; so come. Millicent will join us in the dining-room.'

" And, with a coquetish air of gallantry, she extended her arm to her nephew, in order that he might offer his, *en cavalier*; and away they went across the hall; and the dinner smelt savourily.

" Just as the happy pair were about to seat themselves, the butler returned with news that Miss Maloney was not in her room.

" ' Oh, then,' said Miss Pennefather, ' she has probably gone into the library. Tell Gibson to go and find her.'

" ' Gibson isn't in, Ma'am,' said the butler.

" ' Why, who dressed her, I wonder?' said the Aunt. ' She could not have dressed without her maid.'

" ' Miss Gibson hasn't been in since the morning,' said a tall, white-faced footman.

" ' What's the meaning of this?' said Miss Pennefather.

Nobody knew; everybody looked. Some looked wise, some looked foolish.

" ' I'll go to her room myself,' said Miss Pennefather. ' Excuse me, Philip, for a few

minutes. This is mighty strange ! I can't comprehend it.'

" The Lieutenant was in a very awkward position, standing in the middle of the dining-room, exposed to the gaze of the servants, who had heard a week before, from Miss Gibson, the cause of his intended visit.

" ' Thomas, put the covers on again,' said the butler ; and the dinner vanished from the longing eyes of the hungry soldier.

" A loud scream just at this instant rang through the house. The maid-servants scrambled up the stairs ; and when they reached Miss Millicent Maloney's bed-room, they found their amiable mistress, Miss Laura Pennefather, in a violent fit at the foot of the bed."

Wells had just reached this point of his narrative when we arrived at the gate of Ashmead : after we had entered the house he thus continued his account of the proceedings at Aunt Pennefather's.

" No sooner had the amiable mistress of the house recovered from her fainting, which held

for some time, and was eventually overcome by the application of hartshorn and Eau de Cologne, the burning of feathers, the sprinkling of water, and all the established remedies recommended by the Humane Society for the restoration of hysterical ladies, than she screamed out the name of Millicent Maloney, in a tone emulating that of a peacock in anticipation of rain ; but, although she had regained the use of her voice, her intellectual faculties continued in a lamentable state of obfuscation—her eyes rolled in every direction—her fists remained clenched—and the first coherent phrase which the anxious attendants could understand was this, ‘ Who the devil is it with ? ’

“ Then it was the maid-servants looked at each other—then it was they began to feel a confidence that their suspicions were well founded, and that something very extraordinary had happened to Miss Millicent Maloney.

“ ‘ Where is she ? ’ said the recovering Pen-

nefather—‘ where is she ?—I ask you all, where is she ?’

“ ‘ She ?’ said one.

“ ‘ Where ?” said another.

“ ‘ Where is who ?’ cried a third.

“ ‘ Millicent—my child Millicent !’ said Miss Pennefather.

“ ‘ Child !’ said Mary.

“ ‘ Child !’ exclaimed Jenny.

“ ‘ Child !’ reiterated Susan.

“ ‘ Yes,’ faltered out Miss Pennefather—‘ my child—my niece—my young friend !’

“ ‘ The last time I saw her, Ma’am,’ said Susan, ‘ was a-going down the garden, just by the ewe-trees, towards the summer-house.’

“ ‘ When was that ?’ said Miss Pennefather.

“ ‘ About ten o’clock this morning,’ said Susan.

“ ‘ Psha ! Ridiculous !’ said her mistress.
‘ Didn’t she lunch with me at half-past one ?’

“ ‘ I only said——’

“ ‘ Stuff ! Nonsense !’ exclaimed the lady.

‘ Lift me up—raise my head. Where’s Philip? Where’s the note? Oh, here. What on earth shall I do—what shall I do?’

“ Hereabouts the unfortunate lady relapsed into a state of insensibility, and the note which she had previously clenched in her hand, and about which she evinced such earnest solicitude, fell from her grasp.

“ ‘ Susan,’ said Mary, as it tumbled on the floor.

“ ‘ Mary,’ said Susan, nodding her head.

“ ‘ Susan,’ said Jenny—‘ I say——’

“ Whereupon they began signalling to each other, to take advantage of their mistress’s ‘ absence’ to inform themselves of the contents of the billet. The sympathies of mischief and curiosity combined were at work, and, without the waste of another word, the domestic Graces of the unconscious Venus were busily occupied: one in greedily swallowing with her eyes the intelligence so anxiously coveted, and the other two grouped so as to prevent Miss Pennefather

seeing what was going on if she should happen suddenly to open her swain-killing eyes.

“ Susan took upon herself the active and responsible part of the performance, and picking up the note, which they knew to be of Miss Maloney’s writing, read, *sotto voce*, what follows:—

“ ‘ MY DEAREST FRIEND,

“ ‘ Your constant and long-continued kindness to me makes it doubly painful to me to take the decided step which, nevertheless, I have resolved upon. I would not for the world oppose your wishes or incur your displeasure ; but the crisis is at hand, and therefore I am forced to act promptly. My heart is so devotedly attached and so immutably engaged to another, that it would be worse than hypocrisy even to permit your nephew to be introduced to me in the character of an avowed lover. In cases such as these, discussions only excite and promote angry feelings. I have made my own decision, and will abide by it, let what may be the conse-

quences. Before this reaches you I shall have placed my fate beyond the chance of alteration —two days hence you shall have further particulars. In the meantime assure yourself that I am safe and happy, and always affectionately yours,

“ ‘ MILICENT MALONEY.’

“ ‘ That’s it, is it?’ said Mary, rubbing her mistress’s temples with Eau de Cologne.

“ ‘ That’s it,’ rejoined Jenny, as she chafed her mistress’s hands; ‘ and a pretty it, it is, too.’

“ ‘ Can you guess who?’ whispered Susan.

“ ‘ Hush ! Hem !—do you feel yourself a little better, Ma’am?’ said Jenny, finding Miss Pennefather ‘ coming to,’ as she called it.

“ ‘ Jane,’ said Miss Pennefather, gasping for breath; ‘ I never can be better. Tell me, where’s the note?’

“ ‘ Where’s the note, Susan?’ said Jane.

“ ‘ What note?’ said Susan.

“ ‘ Do you mean that bit of paper doubled up, down there ? ” said Mary.

“ ‘ Yes, child, yes ! ” said Miss Pennefather ; ‘ that’s it ; give it me. Do you know anything at all about it ? ”

“ ‘ It, Ma’am ! ” said Mary.

“ ‘ What, Ma’am ? ” said Susan.

“ ‘ What do you mean, Ma’am ? ” said Jenny.

“ ‘ Why, about Miss Millicent’s going off,’ said Miss Pennefather.

“ ‘ Off ! ” exclaimed Susan.

“ ‘ Going ! ” cried Mary.

“ ‘ Going off ! ” screamed Jenny.

“ ‘ Off ! ” repeated the lady. ‘ This note tells me that she has left me—fled—run away, in short. But can nobody guess who the man is ? ”

“ ‘ Man ! ” exclaimed the three maids at once.

“ ‘ Yes—man ! ” said Miss Pennefather emphatically. ‘ She is gone away with a man.’

“ ‘ Dear me ! ” said Susan.

“ ‘ Oh dear ! ” cried Jane.

“ ‘ Oh, bless me ! ” said Mary.

" ' Have you seen nobody about the house lately ? ' said Miss Pennefather.

" ' No,' was the general reply, with an exception made by Susan, of John Bartram, the old man known as the ' helper,' and who did all the work of all the regular servants.

" ' Nonsense,' said the lady. ' Oh, no, no ; there is some fly-away Irishman in the case, I have no doubt. Just like her mother—no care —no thought. What am I to do with my poor nephew ? What am I to say ? How am I to excuse myself ? I can't dine—I can't sit up. Susan, go and tell Simmons to give my love to Mr. Philip, and say I am too unwell to go down to dinner ; beg him to dine, and—but then what will *he* think ? You had better let Simmons tell him—no, go yourself—go yourself, and explain why I cannot dine with him. Say I shall, I hope, be better in the evening, and will talk over matters with him, and—if he should ask about Millicent, why—you know what I have told you, and so—make him understand—break it to him—it is better than trusting

Simmons—besides, I cannot tell him myself. Oh, Millicent, Millicent—foolish, headstrong girl ! ”

“ Susan, of course, obeyed her mistress’s commands, although the mission to which she was appointed was, in fact, one of considerable delicacy and no little difficulty. Susan, who was an extremely pretty black-eyed girl, took the precaution, before she proceeded to the interview with the Lieutenant, to run into Miss Pennefather’s dressing-room in order to give her jetty ringlets a fresh twirl round her finger, and settle the little fanciful cap which she wore on her head. It is impossible to trace the exact current of female minds ; but, however absurd it may appear, Susan, at the moment, felt the possibility of such a thing happening as the Lieutenant, being in the extremity of his despair for the loss of the mistress, drawn suddenly into a violent admiration of the maid.

“ Susan’s heart fluttered terribly as she approached the dining-parlour in which Merman had been “left alone in his glory ;” Simmons

having taken the precaution of having the ‘soup and fish’ taken back to the kitchen to wait for further orders. Susan tapped at the door—a precautionary habit sedulously inculcated in all decent families—the “come in” of Lieutenant Merman brought her face to face with that distinguished officer.

“When the door was opened, Merman was discovered standing with his back to the fire munching the piece of bread which had been deposited on the side of his plate, and which, in the then ravenous state of his appetite, he could no longer resist.

“‘I beg your pardon, Sir,’ said Susan, dropping a sort of theatrical half-curtsey, ‘but my mistress begs you will not wait dinner for her. She will come down in the evening, when she hopes to be better.’

“‘And Miss Maloney?’ said Merman, inquiringly.

“‘Why, Sir,’ said Susan, colouring deeply, ‘Miss Maloney, Sir,—is—that’s it, Sir—’

“‘It!—what?’ said the Lieutenant.

“ ‘ Why, Sir,’ said Susan, ‘ that’s the reason my mistress is not well enough to come down.’

“ ‘ What?’ again said the soldier.

“ ‘ Miss Millicent, Sir, is gone out.’

“ ‘ Gone out!’ said Merman.

“ ‘ Yes, Sir.’

“ ‘ What, in the snow?’

“ ‘ I don’t know, I’m sure, Sir,’ said Susan ; ‘ but—she is gone.’

“ ‘ Alone?’ said Merman.

“ ‘ I can’t say, Sir,’ said Susan ; ‘ but my mistress seems to think not.’

“ ‘ Are we to wait till she returns?’ asked Merman.

“ ‘ Oh dear no !’ said the maiden. ‘ I believe, if you were, you’d have to wait a long time.’

“ ‘ What do you mean?’ said Merman.
‘ Come here : tell me—is Miss Maloney gone on a visit, or——’

“ ‘ No, Sir,’ said Susan : ‘ don’t be angry, Sir ; we all know what you are come here for, and so did Miss Millicent, and so, Sir,—don’t

tell my mistress that I told you all,—Miss Millicent has run away with somebody else ;—don't be in a passion, don't.'

" ' Passion !' exclaimed the Lieutenant. ' I don't see why I should be in a passion. I never saw her, and therefore couldn't care much for her. Now, I am free to choose whom I like.'

" ' That's very true, Sir,' said Susan, biting her lips to make them redder than usual. The look which the pretty girl put on immediately reminded the Lieutenant that he was treating her more confidentially than, considering their relative positions, was either necessary or becoming, by expressing in so unreserved a manner the satisfaction which he felt at the defection of his intended wife.

" ' My mistress begs you will eat your dinner, Sir,' said Susan.

" ' I'll endeavour,' said Merman ; ' but give my love to her, and ask her if I may send her something ; and—will you tell the butler that I'm ready.' "

" Susan bobbed an assenting curtsey, and left

the room perfectly satisfied that her mistress's nephew was not likely to die for love, at least upon the present occasion."

It turned out in the sequel that Miss Millicent Maloney had left her heart in the Emerald Isle, and that the gentleman who had it in his keeping had been summoned to England as soon as Miss Laura Pennefather had expressed her determination with regard to Merman. There was nothing objectionable about the lady's favourite, except that worldly blemish—a want of fortune. And all Merman's present anxieties were directed to the immediate conclusion of his affair with Fanny Wells, while his aunt's irritation of feeling towards Millicent continued, fearing, naturally enough, that time and her natural affections would soften her anger and relax the resolution which she had in her rage announced to him, of cutting her off entirely. Here, however, the light infantry officer was defeated: Laura could forget and forgive, or rather it may be said she forgave because she could not forget; and, at the termi-

nation of the Lieutenant's visit, his aunt gave him to understand that if she remained in her present mind, as to Millicent's conduct, he would, at her death, receive a moiety of the sum intended for him if his marriage with Millicent had taken place.

This made a vast difference in his position. The diminution of the amount of his expected fortune by one-half,—the contingency, too, by which he was to run his military life against that of a quiet, moderate lady of regular habits and a good constitution, were serious drawbacks: he certainly loved Fanny better than any body else, except himself, and considering the fortune he was to look to, in conjunction with her charms, and hating the notion that she would very soon find out if he did not marry *her*, that he had been rejected by Miss Maloney, he sat down and wrote to Wells, giving his own version of his expedition, and begging to be allowed to return to his old quarters, and offering himself, such as he was, for the acceptance of his daughter.

It was in this position of affairs that Wells sought my advice and an opinion whether considering that Merman had actually retired, and gone avowedly to marry another woman, Fanny could, consistently with the dignity of her character, receive him again, and consent to become his wife, because the other lady would not have him.

The point, I admit, was one of considerable delicacy, but as far as I could see, or indeed suggest, it seemed to me most particularly to rest upon Wells's objection to the change of fortune, and Fanny's feelings towards the Lieutenant: at all events, my proposition was, that if Wells was himself not hostile to the marriage for financial reasons, Fanny should be left entirely to herself, to decide according to her wishes and inclinations.

Mrs. Wells was outrageously indignant at the proposition, which she considered in the light of a downright insult, and did not hesitate to appropriate to the absent officer the epithets of "fortune-hunter," "coxcomb," and "im-

pudent fellow." Fanny, however, did not join in the cry against him, but maintained that all he did was perfectly disinterested, and that he had consented to give her up only to save her from the necessity of making sacrifices, and exposing herself to difficulties and inconveniences which she was even yet ready to encounter for the sake of her dear Philip. With great dutifulness, however, she declared her willingness to be guided entirely by her father, a proof of her obedience which I confess lost some of its merit in my eyes, from her knowing which way it was most probable the Rector would decide, when there was a prospect of marrying off a daughter.

CHAPTER II.

THINGS were thus proceeding, when, having forewarned poor Harriet of the dangerous state of Tom Falwasser's health, I anxiously awaited the arrival of intelligence from Sniggs. With the morning came worse accounts of the boy, and by the post came the following letter from his eldest sister :—

“ *Montpelier, Bath.* ”

“ DEAR UNCLE.—Pappy is most anxious to hear about Tom, and wondered why you did not write; but when I told him you did not know where to direct to him, he was quite satisfied: pray let him hear about my brother. Pappy has got the pretty cottage Mrs. Brandy-

ball talked of next to our school, and seems very happy. Mrs. Brandyball is very attentive and kind to him, and very good to us; indeed, neither Jane nor I do anything but what we please. We are mostly in at the cottage, for Pappy likes us to be as much with him as we can. Pappy says that when Tom gets well he is to come to us here, and then perhaps after the Easter holidays we shall all go to some other place, for I should not be very much surprised if our governess was to give up her school. Pappy says it must be so fatiguing to her, and thinks that she would have quite enough to do to superintend the education of me and Jane.

“ I hope dear aunty and the little boy are quite well, and dear Fanny and Bessy. I should be delighted to hear from the latter. Give my love, and Jane sends hers. Pappy desires to be kindly remembered, and hopes you will let him hear soon.

“ Yours, dear Uncle, affectionately,

“ KATE FALWASSER.”

I was not in a humour to think much about

myself when I received this despatch, for my mind was fully occupied with the fate of poor Tom; but certainly, as the communication—by proxy—of an affectionate brother, the self-proposed godfather of my child, his infant nephew, never was anything less satisfactory. To have expected Cuthbert to exert himself to the extent of favouring me with an autograph letter might have been too much, but to find no word, no syllable from him, referring in the slightest degree either to my wife or child, or to his intentions respecting his sponsorial proposition, nor indeed any hint even tending to make me fancy that I occupied the smallest share of his attention, was beyond my anticipations. That it was painful I admit, and if I had been in a state to dwell upon it, it would have awakened a thousand feelings, which perhaps it was as well should not be called into play. It was evident that Mrs. Brandyball's influence was rapidly increasing, and the artless manner in which Kate mentioned the probability of that *amiable* lady's giving up the fatigue of general tuition, to devote her time

and talents to the exclusive improvement of my two half-nieces, convinced me that all my worst apprehensions were eventually to be realised.

To Harriet I merely communicated the fact that I had heard from Cuthbert—for I could not venture to apprise her of the nature of his letter. She, dear soul, was so full of kindness, so feelingly alive to my interests, and had devoted herself so entirely for *my* sake to *him*, that I was sure she would feel deeply and bitterly the tone and spirit of Kate's letter. In fact, I do not think, since the day of my beloved mother's death, (a day always present to my memory,) I ever felt so perfectly miserable as on this.

With one o'clock—the hour of luncheon—came Sniggs, and his report was such as to convince me that no hope remained of saving the boy; it then struck me that I would wait until the fatal event occurred, and immediately afterwards start for Bath to break the news to Cuthbert; then I resolved upon writing, anticipating in my letter the worst which might

happen. Sniggs worried me with technicalities, and the smell of the camphor with which he was highly perfumed reminded me of the danger likely to be incurred by his visit; for although the whole establishment had been rendered proof against the infection, still the baby was yet unharmed, and when I saw him deliberately sit down to help himself to cold fowl and tongue, and ask the servant for some hot potato and cold butter, my patience was severely tested.

Yet why should I have been vexed and irritated? What was poor Tom Falwasser to him? He was his patient, and promised to be a valuable one, supposing his recovery to excite his father-in-law's gratitude—but else Tom, uninteresting as it must be confessed he was while in health, interested not my worthy friend the apothecary more than any other lout who might be put under his care for cure. Sniggs evidently enjoyed his repast, and from him I learned that Daly had actually left Blissfold; the state of mind in which he found the Rector and myself,

and the unceremonious manner in which we felt absolutely compelled to turn him out, had determined him no doubt to quit a place, the hospitality of which could not have appeared to him in any very favourable light. It was, however, a seasonable relief to me to be assured of his absence. All that I had to reproach myself with was, the not having taken a favourable opportunity to inquire if any pecuniary aid would be essentially serviceable to him. I consoled myself, however, upon this point with the belief that if he felt himself at any time "hard run" he would make no scruple in applying to me for assistance.

"Gad!" said Sniggs, "this is an awkward job—Master Tom's dying at my house—infec-tious disease—keep away patients—never had such a thing happen to me before—odd circum-stance—deuced unlucky."

"It is, indeed," said I, thinking at the same time of the two bottles of cherry brandy.

"You know Dr. Fuz by sight," said Sniggs, still eating—"the old man at Bassford—retired

from practice now ; did live here five-and-twenty years ago—comes to church sometimes—sits in the chancel opposite the Rector—he had a patient in *his* house—did I ever tell you that, Sir?"

"I think not," said I, in a tone which ought to have induced a belief that I did not particularly wish to hear it then.

"Deuced odd," said my friend. "Fuz was riding home one night from visiting, and was stopped by a highwayman—things now getting out of fashion. 'Money or your life !' said the fellow. Fuz pulled up—a man who had saved so many other lives instinctively desired to preserve his own. 'Don't abuse me, Sir—you shall have all I have got.' Dark as it was, the remotest recesses of the Doctor's pockets were hunted in order to satisfy the rapacity of the robber, and twenty guineas, a ten pound note, a few shillings, and a gold watch, were delivered to the marauder, who, making the Doctor a graceful bow, wished him a good evening and went his way. Fuz—fond of money as he was, and deeply regretting his watch, the heir-loom

of the Fuzzes—put spurs to his horse, which, as George Colman says,

‘—— was indeed a very sorry hack,
But that’s of course,
For what’s expected from a horse
With an apothecary on his back ?’

He ! he ! he ! So away goes Fuz as hard as he can with such cavalry—reaches home—rushes into the arms of Mrs. F., and bids her thank Providence that he is returned safe and sound, although deprived of his gold, silver, notes, watch, and ornamental appendages.

“ ‘ What are ornaments compared with your life ? ’ exclaimed the affectionate female Fuz. ‘ I do thank Providence—think no more of the money, love—it is, as they say, only mounting twenty or thirty pair of stairs next week, and it will all return.’ And after this sweet parley they sat themselves down to supper.

“ Scarcely had they entered fully into the enjoyment of the sociable meal before a loud ringing at their gate aroused them from their comforts.

" ' I know what it is,' said Fuz ; ' Mrs. Rat-tletrap is——'

" What, I can't say," said Sniggs, " for the rest of the Doctor's supposition was cut short by the entrance of one of the servants, who announced that a gentleman had been fired at by a highwayman not a quarter of an hour before, and severely wounded. His horse, from which he had fallen, had escaped, and two labourers who had found him lying on the ground groaning heavily had brought him direct to the Doctor's door.

" Up jumped the Doctor, out he ran, and there sure enough found a gentleman bleeding and looking excessively pale ; he had him carried into one of the parlours, and laid upon a sofa—his coat was taken off, and upon examination it appeared that he had received a gun-shot wound in his left arm—the ball however had passed clean through, marvellously escaping the heart of the sufferer, who, it was evident to the learned Fuz, was rendered senseless by the fall from his horse rather than the effects of the hit.

The Doctor, who was one of the most humane of men, first bled his patient, and then, when the gentleman was sufficiently recovered to comprehend the extent of his care and hospitality, told him that he could not think of letting him stir out that night, and had accordingly ordered a bed to be got ready for him. The wounded stranger was quite overpowered by the courtesy of his doctor.

“ ‘ Sir,’ said Fuz, ‘ it is not mere commonplace civility that I offer. It is a duty I owe to Providence, Sir ;—the villain who wounded *you* robbed *me*, Sir, not half an hour before, within twenty yards of the same place ; if I had happened to deny him, or to have had nothing about me, gad, Sir, I might have been shot instead of you.’

“ ‘ Very probably, Sir,’ said the gentleman, ‘ I believe it is very bad policy to make any resistance—somebody is sure to suffer.’

“ ‘ Oh,’ said Fuz, ‘ that’s very true ; but the highwayman sometimes gets the worst of it.’

“ ‘ Yes,’ said the patient, ‘ but I shall never

try my hand again that way; however, your kindness, Sir, has been most seasonably bestowed, and I hope to be able to show you how very sensibly I feel it.'

" 'Don't mention it, Sir,' said Fuz; 'don't fatigue yourself with talking—lean on me—I will show you the way to your room;—you will find everything comfortable, I hope. I shall bring you some gruel with a leetle very old Lisbon in it—Mrs. Fuz's favourite tipple—and a leetle dry toast, and then you will get a comfortable night, as I hope, and in the morning I shall have the happiness of presenting you to Mrs. F., and in two or three days all will be well again.'

" It should be observed," continued Sniggs, " not that I mean to question my old predecessor's philanthropy, but it *is* possible such a thing might have had its effect—that, when he removed the stranger's coat and waistcoat, he—accidentally of course—perceived a good store of sterling coin in one of the pockets of the latter garment, which gave the provident Doctor a

good, or rather a golden opinion of his chance customer, and seemed fully to justify the resistance which he had made to the highwayman's attack.

“ ‘ I can never thank you sufficiently,’ said the patient, as he toiled his way to the room appropriated to his use. Arrived at the apartment the Doctor’s own man was in attendance to assist and undress the opulent stranger.

“ ‘ And now,’ said Fuz, ‘ now, my dear Sir, when you are comfortably in bed, and would like the gruel I spoke of, do as Lady Macbeth did—

‘ Strike upon the bell,’

and I will bring ‘ the drink ’ myself. There is something in your misfortune and my escape which specially binds me to you—so do as I prescribe.’

“ ‘ Indeed, Sir,’ said the gentleman, ‘ your kindness is far beyond anything I could have expected from a stranger.’

“ ‘ Not a word about it, Sir,’ said Fuz; ‘ you see I act upon the best principle. You were a stranger, and I have taken you in.’

" Well," said Sniggs, " the bell was struck—the gruel was taken—the patient shook the Doctor's hand, and they parted; the Doctor entreating the patient if he should feel the wound uneasy or any feverish symptoms should annoy him during the night, to ring his bell and summon him to his apartment.

" What Fuz said to Mrs. F. in that season of perfect ingenuousness which is comprised in the half-hour after retiring to rest, I know not," continued Sniggs, " but the chances are that he congratulated himself upon having what he called formed a connexion; he spoke with admiration of the manner of his guest, and certainly did not omit to substantiate all his favourable opinions by a reference to the contents of his sinister waistcoat-pocket—

' Gold is the strength, the sinews of the world;
The health, the soul, the beauty most divine;
A mask of gold hides all deformities,—
Gold is heaven's physic, life's restorative.'

So says Dekkar, and so thought Fuz.

" Well, Sir," said Sniggs, " the patient slept

soundly—no bell rang. Fuz was equally at his ease, nor did he wake till nine. Up he gets—dresses with the nicest precision—and down to his patient in the best bed-room—taps at the door—no answer—taps again—still mute—‘Gad ! he’s dead !’ muttered Fuz : ‘tetanus, by Jove.’ In he bolts—rushes to the bed—there was the nest, but the bird was flown. What did it mean ? what could it mean ?—where was he ? what was he ? In the midst of his confusion, Fuz threw his eyes upon a neat small table covered with a red cloth, whereon were deposited an inkstand, portfeuille, and all the other implements for writing, upon which lay a note, without a superscription, which, being directed to nobody, might be meant for anybody. This Fuz opened, and thus he read :—

“ ‘ DEAR SIR,’

“ ‘ I shall never forget your kindness. I felt it necessary to relieve you of my presence as soon as possible. You are much too good a fellow to suffer. Under the pillow of my bed you will find twenty guineas and a ten pound

note ; accept them without scruple, for they are your own : and in order further to show my sense of gratitude, I beg to add, that if you will take the trouble to walk to the second field on the right hand beyond the turnpike, you will find your watch, chain, and seals stuck into a haystack which stands in the corner of it. I have to apologize for not having wound it up. I do not regret my wound, for if the two worthies who shot me last night had been as goodnatured as you, I should never have had the pleasure of your acquaintance, and you would never have got your own property back as a fee.

“ ‘ Yours.’

“ ‘ Gad so ! ’ cried the Doctor, ‘ this is strange ! ’ The Doctor, however, did not lose much time before he lifted the pillow and found his money, and the first thing he did after he had break-fasted was to walk to the hay-stack and recover his watch. Wasn’t that a good joke ? ”

“ Yes,” said I, having mechanically listened to the narrative.

"But," continued he, having completely anatomized the chicken, "I must be off again, You shall hear in an hour—and another bulletin before post-time."

"If it ends fatally," said I, "I shall go to my brother—that I am resolved upon."

In this determination Sniggs strengthened me; and as soon as he had left the house, I went to Harriet, in order to prepare her for my departure. Mrs. Wells had, for the first day since my wife's confinement, left her and gone to the Rectory accompanied by Fanny, so that I had an opportunity of talking over our family matters without interruption ; and since Harriet had now recovered sufficient strength to discuss the several points which appeared to press, it was a great comfort to me to find her views of the future characterized by the same sweet, mild, and generous spirit which she had uniformly displayed in what I now began to fear might have been our brightest days. My anticipations with regard to my brother's conduct after the death of Tom seemed perfectly to agree with those

of my wife ; we felt that he was estranged from us, and that nothing was wanting but such an event as this to sever entirely the bonds between us.

“ What does it signify, Gilbert ? ” said Harriet : “ we have a larger house than we want : a cottage will answer our purpose, and a plain, nice little garden will do just as well, without all these grounds, and these hothouses, and pineries, and luxuries. Oh no, dear ; so long as we have health we shall have happiness ; and, after all, Gilbert, we shall be more independent.”

“ Come,” said I, “ we will not make up our minds yet to the reality of our reverses : it is quite right, when one does depend upon the will of others, to be prepared for the worst ; and you delight me by the way in which you bend to the coming wave. Still, I will not suffer myself to think so ill either of Cuthbert’s head or heart as even yet entirely to believe that we shall need to practise our philosophy.”

Thus I said ; but did not *feel* as secure as I wished my poor love to imagine I did.

While these things were passing at Ashmead,

other affairs were in progress at the Rectory. Merman, whose anxiety and rapidity of movement induced me to think that he was sincerely attached to Fanny, had followed his letter, and was actually ensconced in his old lodgings in Blissfold within a few hours after Wells received it. Of this fact he apprised the worthy Rector, and it was in consequence of these prompt measures that Mrs. Wells and her daughter had gone home to deliberate and decide.

It is impossible for me to say what were the arguments adduced pro and con, or who chiefly advocated the cause of the Lieutenant; but, as I have already stated, the moment I heard that offended pride and a lady's love were to be put in opposite scales, and that Miss Fanny was to hold the beam, I entertained very little doubt which would preponderate.

I ought, perhaps, to mention that Miss Millicent Maloney had not been heard of by Mrs. Pennefather at the time of the Lieutenant's departure—a circumstance which induced her affectionate friend to believe that the companion

of her flight was not altogether so unexceptionable as she had hoped. It turned out, moreover, that the young lady's maid, Gibson, did not accompany her; but, on the contrary, was perfectly ignorant of her flight. Miss Maloney having sent her on an errand to the neighbouring town, desiring her to wait there for her, she did wait until so long after the usual dinner hour at home, that she fancied she must have made some mistake, and then returned; and, as she said herself, "the very first syllable as ever she heard of Miss Milly's going was from Susan when she came into the house."

Nobody in the neighbourhood had seen Miss Maloney out in the afternoon, either alone or with anybody else; no horses had been ordered from, nor come to, any of the inns in the town, nor to the alehouse in the village, nor had any carriage passed through since the morning. Where, how, when, and with whom the young lady had migrated still therefore remained a mystery.

Not so the termination of the proceedings at the Rectory; for, hearing the approach of visitors across the lawn somewhere about four o'clock, I looked out and beheld four familiar faces, "wreathed in smiles," looking up at the windows of Harriet's room. They belonged to the Rector and his lady, who walked first, and to Fanny Wells and Lieutenant Merman, who followed arm-in-arm, just as sociable as if nothing had ever happened to ripple the course of their true love.

I welcomed the young couple—for now they were avowedly a pair—and shook my brother-in-law by the hand, with a determination to make the best of it, still however silently wishing that the service of his country might require his presence in some field of glory far from the quiet plains of Ashmead.

It was now drawing near post-time, and I was waiting impatiently either for Sniggs, or a despatch from him, in order to regulate my proceedings. It was just five, and I grew dreadfully uneasy, and began to pace up and down my

library, when the door opened and the servant gave me a note from Sniggs, sealed with black wax. My fingers trembled as I opened it. Opened, however, it was, and I read :

“ DEAR SIR,

“ The boy is less feverish, and I think things look better. You shall see me this evening.

“ Yours,

“ S. SNIGGS.”

This unexpected report, of course, decided my stay ; and, accordingly, I wrote to Cuthbert a detailed account of Tom’s progress, and would have enclosed Snigg’s last hope-giving note, but I was sure that the word “ boy ” would have excited all my brother’s ire, and given an idea of neglect and carelessness in our proceedings, so I copied it, leaving the fact, and substituting the word patient for the less respectful monosyllable which I found in the original.

I confess I was quite delighted with the bulletin, worded as it might have been ; for,

when the crisis seemed to be so evidently at hand, every cross word I had uttered with regard to young Falwasser seemed to rise up in judgment against me, although when he was well I scarcely ever saw a human being I hated so much.

We are strange creatures, and I, perhaps, one of the oddest; however, I ate my dinner with a better appetite than I expected; and after it was over, drank, conjointly, the healths of Fanny Wells and Lieutenant Philip Merman. This seemed strangest of all.

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CHAPTER III.

I CONFESS that I went to bed, after having received Sniggs' account of Tom, and after having transmitted it in my own language to Cuthbert, with an infinitely stronger hope of getting some tolerable rest than I had entertained for many previous nights. I had done what I felt to be my duty to a brother, who, eccentric as he might be, had always shown me the greatest kindness, and of whose mutability of disposition towards me I might, even now, have formed the most groundless and unjustifiable anticipations; and, in so doing, had conquered a pride and prejudice which I ought probably never to have entertained in such a case.

The moment my mind was a little relieved under these circumstances, my thoughts naturally directed themselves to an object which most especially claimed an undivided interest, but which the agitating events of the last few days had separated—I mean, the state, condition, and prospects of my son and heir. What his inheritance might be it seemed somewhat difficult to calculate; but I thought, young as he was, that it was time to consult with Harriet as to the steps to be taken with regard to his baptism, and whether, if Tom should happily recover, I might venture to remind Cuthbert of his promise of standing godfather.

Nothing in the world, I am convinced, is more seriously or more constantly worrying than the possession of a very near relative with a very whimsical disposition. The moment I made my suggestion to Harriet, which I did dandling the dear little baby in my arms—only think—she instantly started the difficulty which existed in taking the first step: if we did not remind Cuthbert of the promise he had made, he might take

the trouble to be offended with us; and if we *did* jog his memory, the chances were a hundred to one that he would be in as great a passion as he could muster because we bored him on the subject. Then there was to be another god-father and a godmother; now we thought over one or two eligible men for Cuthbert's brother-sponsor, in case *he* stood; but then we dare not whisper our wishes to any one of them until we had taken counsel from the nabob: and, as for a godmother, we did not know where to turn for one. The Nubleys were away, and had let their house to a sporting gentleman, with three or four questionable nieces, or cousins, or sisters, or something of that sort; so that neither Mr. Nubley on the one hand, nor Mrs. Nubley on the other, were available. Mrs. Wells might perhaps officiate; but then—in short, all seemed to depend upon Cuthbert's fiat, and Cuthbert and his fiat depended on Tom's recovery.

As far as this very important event went, it was my good fortune to receive a favourable account soon after ten o'clock: things looked

better, and Sniggs had hopes, which, however, were tempered conditionally, “if” so and so happened in the course of the day, and “if” so and so did not happen in the night, “we might anticipate a favourable result;” which, if I had not felt sanguinely, and had been by any means jocosely inclined, I should have construed into a sort of sage declaration on the part of Sniggs, that, under all circumstances, it was his opinion that if poor Tom did not die, he would recover.

Nevertheless there was hope—and a brighter hope than had beamed a day before; and, as Sniggs was good enough to inform me in a postscript, that he would be at Ashmead as usual at one—an hour at which he was as certain to appear as Monk Lewis’s popular ghost was to exhibit itself in its immediate opposite in the twenty-four hours, I felt convinced that he was in his own mind satisfied of the chances, at least, in the young uncouth patient’s favour.

Having talked placidly with Harriet, played my child into a squalling fit, and received a sort of reproachful look from the nurse for

having jumped it about at much too violent a rate for its age and size—for I had not at that period any just notion of the relative strength of materials, I proceeded to strengthen my outward man with breakfast; at which time the post arrives, and which, by an admirable contrivance of the General Post Office, under the actual, though not nominal guidance of one of the worthiest of men and most efficient public officers that ever lived, does me the favour to bring to my hand my London and my cross-country letters all at once, “simultaneously,” as poor Nubley would have muttered while picking his dear old chin, so that my news flowed in from all quarters, if I had any to receive from more than one.

My bag arrived—was deposited, unlocked—one letter from London about furniture—one from Winchester about books—one from Bath, about what, I wonder?—a strange hand, evidently a woman’s, a long, delicate, nearly unintelligible scrawl—a seal I know not—who can this be?—Bath—not Cuthbert? Yes, thought I, it is from my dear indolent Indian, who, in the

plenitude of his laziness, has got some one of his fair friends at Montpelier to scrawl it for him ; and then I thought I recognised the extremely pretty unintelligibility of Kate's calligraphy —that, of course, I opened first, for furniture and books, although on their road, could not very rapidly follow their *avant couriers* :—crack went the seal—flap went the paper, and I saw—

“ *Montpelier, Bath.* ”

“ DEAR MR. GURNEY,

Your good, kind, but terribly lazy brother has begged me to be his amanuensis ; and when a request, even were its fulfilment troublesome in any eminent degree, is made by so amiable and so universally beloved a person as he is, it is wholly beyond the power of ordinary humanity to resist or refuse—in order to make some particular inquiries concerning the state of health of the dear, interesting Thomas, to whom we are all devotedly attached :—nothing indeed, my dear Mr. Gurney, contributes more essentially to the maintenance of

the sentiments of high regard and fervent esteem which my bosom cherishes for your amiable brother, than the generous and paternal anxiety with which he regards the every thought and action of the dear children, who are rendered invaluable to him by the memory of their departed mother, than whom—from all I hear, not only from him but from other individuals, who had the honour and happiness of being favoured, not only with her mere ordinary acquaintance, but with friendship which may be considered really intimate and confidential—was, if ever there was what is colloquially called an angel upon earth, one of them in every acceptation of that very comprehensive phraseology.

“ His anxiety—dear, kind-hearted man—is naturally increased in a ten-fold degree by the knowledge that circumstances render it impossible for you or your dear Harriet to afford poor Thomas any personal attention, and that he is consigned to the care of the professional gentleman who attends you: he is however confident

that every care and attention will be used with respect to his comforts, and his diet, and the gratification of all his little wishes, as far as may be consistent with the cooling regimen so essentially necessary in a case like his; and he desires me to say that you may, at any seasonable opportunity, insinuate in the manner you may consider most effective, without violating any of the delicacies and decorums of society, to which professional gentlemen are so sensitively alive, that the recovery of Master Falwasser will be an event likely to prove, in every way, advantageous to Mr. Sniggs."

Here I laid down the letter for one minute or so, in order to think of what had passed during the last few weeks. Here was Mrs. Brandyball writing to me—the amanuensis of my brother—a stranger—an alien—dictating, in his name, to me, what to do and how to act—anticipating a carefulness and watchfulness on the part of Sniggs, which unfortunately had not existed, and promising him a reward for services which reminded me of the last line of a newspaper advertisement from

a man who proposed to doctor smoky chimneys, which ran thus—"No cure, no pay." I paused—thought—put some sugar in my cup—ate a bit of toast—sipped my tea—and having indulged myself in an audible "Well!" proceeded to read on.

" Of one thing I am quite sure—at least so far as it is permitted to human fallibility to be certain of anything—that if dear Thomas were to fall a sacrifice to the dreadful disorder of which he has been visited, it would be productive of the most serious consequences to his sensitively excellent and never-to-be-sufficiently-understood or appreciated father-in-law. As for my own personal feelings upon the subject, assure yourself, my dear Mr. Gurney, they are deeply interested in the result, independently of every other consideration, upon your account and that of your dear Harriet."

" Deuce take the woman!" said I, throwing down the letter; " what in the name of impudence and ignorance does she mean by calling *my* wife Harriet?—who wants her solicitude?—

who cares for her being interested ? Well !”
And up I took the scrawl again.

“ Poor dear Kate, whose intuitive perception of things in general is so remarkable, has satisfied his mind that the infection was derived from the maid-servant in your establishment, who was generally supposed to have been infected by dear Thomas ; and dear Jane, who although not so highly gifted by nature as her elder sister, possesses an extraordinary share of observation and discrimination, considering her apparent diffidence and her actual juvenility, corroborates the opinion of her elder sister, by stating in the most unequivocal manner that Evans—I think the domestic’s patronymic is Evans—told her that she felt seriously indisposed at least three days before dear Thomas experienced any inconvenience.”

“ The deuce take the woman !” again said I, adding a brief prayer for forgiveness ; “ dear Kate says this—and dear Jane says that—and dear Thomas—dear—I will *not* swear, but this is really too much—to be lectured by this Gorgon —to have an elder brother’s authority delegated to a Catamaran like this ! Well !—let us see—

by and by I suppose I shall be charged with a design upon dear Thomas's life, and Daly's joke played off in earnest."

"All these contending circumstances prey upon your dear brother exceedingly, and I must candidly admit that I am confident I run no risk of hazarding your displeasure by a candid expression of my genuine sentiments, that his feelings have been a little exacerbated by the omission on your part to make him acquainted with the progress of the interesting invalid."

"Why, how could I?" exclaimed I to myself. "Where the deuce was I to write to? By—
but no, I won't—I'll keep my temper—that is, if I can. I'll read the infernal thing through. Oh, my poor, poor brother! To think—to fancy—to believe. Well!—let's see."

"I merely venture to insinuate what I think, and to impress upon you the necessity of communicating with him, lest at any future period I might be supposed not to have apprised you of the real state of his feelings."

"This is too plain," said I, again throwing down the epistle, and again sipping my tea,

which I could however hardly swallow for agitation—“ ‘a future period !’ Oh, she looks forward—some ulterior object—to some time when she may be reproached with hypocrisy and manœuvring. If Harriet were but well—but then she is not—if she were, we would go to Bath. But why ?—then Tom—Well !”

“ And especially as I repeat that a fatal termination to the dear boy’s illness would produce the most serious effects upon his mind and constitution.”

“ Considerate creature !” said I.

“ Your brother desires me to tell you that he forgot to say, till Hutton reminded him, that he has paid Binfield, the wine-merchant, up to the first of January, and that he thinks his Madeira dear and not good, and wishes you not to order any more wine of any sort of him.”

This paragraph completed, as I then thought, my misery. Here was a person—a few weeks since an utter stranger to any of us—not only acting secretary between one brother and another, but entering into our domestic discussions

as if she were one of the family ; besides, what a topic to touch upon, to inform Mrs. Brandyball that the wine she admired and patronised so liberally at Ashmead was not mine, but Cuthbert's ; and at the same time, and through the same medium, to convey a prohibitory command as to my ordering any more ! But even this was not the climax, which, in fact, I was very near not reaching, so utterly upset and beaten was I by what I had already read. However, the bitter draught was destined to be drained to the dregs, and everybody knows they generally prove the bitterest portion of the whole. I therefore continued—

“ Aware as you are of your excellent brother's constitutional inactivity, and the listlessness of his mind, you will scarcely give credence, even with your natural tendency to admit their influence over all his mundane transactions, to the fact—that it was not until not only dear Kate and dear Jane, and dear Kate and dear Jane's maid, Hutton, his own man, and myself, had also agreed upon the point, that he could satisfy him-

self whether your dear Harriet's baby was a boy or a girl. He had somehow confused in his mind the fact and the details; and I do assure you—probably his thoughts were pre-occupied by his solicitude concerning poor Thomas—it was not until he found us unanimous that we induced him to fatigue his memory so far as to recall a conversation which he had with you, and which he repeated afterwards to me, when we were alone, upon the subject. What a remarkable instance of evaporative intellectuality!"

This crowned all: "evaporative Tom-foolery!" said I. The idea that the main and leading incident of my life—the birth of my son and heir, of his nephew and intended godson, should have been totally forgotten, or, if not forgotten, so thoroughly jumbled up in his brain during an absence of a few days, as to leave him in a sort of waking dream, from which it required the united efforts of the family to awaken him.

The conclusion of the odious letter was made up of some fulsome compliments in the same high-flown language as characterised the rest of

it ; and having finished it, I threw it from me with a sort of shuddering disgust, which would have chilled me if the heat of anger had not counteracted its effects.

“ So then,” said I, aloud, “ I verily believe, my poor brother is really caught ; dragged from me, and manacled in a distant part of the country : his fetters, to be sure, are covered with roses—full-blown damask roses, it must be admitted. But there he is, as undeniably lost to me, as if he had never existed. Had Gulliver been constituted as Cuthbert was, when he was hampered by the pegs and packthread of the Lilliputians, there he would have lain until they had demolished him at their leisure ; the effort to raise himself upon one hand or make one half turn of his body, by which he could have extricated himself in a moment, would have been an effort too mighty for indolence so overpowering as his, and thus he would have perished.”

I saw no chance of extrication. Mrs. Brandyball, spider like, had gotten him into her web, and was clearly besliming him every moment with

compliments and attentions which would be sure to make him her own, and, Arachne like, when she had rendered him totally helpless she would put him by in store to marry, in all probability, when the before-spoken-of Easter holidays arrived. Well, and what then? Was it by any fault of mine that this had occurred? Had I anything to reproach myself with? What sin of omission or commission had I been guilty of which ought, in any reasonable case, to have produced such results? I asked myself the question over and over again, and received from myself the same answers every time. I searched every corner of my mind in vain for one little morsel of just self-condemnation, but none could I find, and at last I worked myself up into a feeling not altogether fraternal, and wound up my soliloquy with—"Why, then, let him go to the—I won't write what I said—let him go his own way."

This came out impromptu, and I declare free from all selfishness of feeling; but a moment's reflection brought to my view the startling fact

that if Cuthbert went to the place I thought of, wherever it might be, in one direction, I must infallibly go thither in another. He was, as I have often recorded, and oftener felt, the “prop that did sustain my house,” and what was to happen if I treated this letter and its writer with the scorn they seemed to me so richly to merit? I should only seal my destiny, and inflict a wound which I was well assured no time or circumstance could heal.

Speaking of a choice of difficulties, Swift asks, “Supposing the body of the earth were a great ball of the finest sand, and that a single grain or particle of this sand should be annihilated every thousand years. Supposing that you had it in your choice to be happy all the while this prodigious mass of sand was consuming by this slow method until there was not a grain of it left, on condition that you were to be miserable ever after; or supposing that you might be happy ever after, on condition you would be miserable until the whole mass of sand were thus annihilated at the rate of one sand in a thousand

years ; which of these two cases would you make your choice ?”

This question seemed particularly apposite and applicable to my case—Should I pocket all the affronts I had received, and continue dreaming on during poor Cuthbert’s life, in a sort of negative hope of his ultimate return to a just, fraternal, and equitable feeling towards me, and his consequent fulfilment of all the promises he had made, and the realization of all the expectations he had raised, or at once exhibit what nobody could deny would be a just resentment at his abandonment of me in favour of aliens to our blood in the first instance, and in the last of a perfect stranger, and, by thus giving way to my natural feelings, now decide my fate as related to the future expression of his sentiments and the consequent disposition of his property ?

If I had been alone—single in the world as Cuthbert found me when we so strangely met at Gosport—I know how I should have settled

the affair. I should have got rid of the difficulty much after the Hibernian manner in which Alexander *untied* the Gordian knot by cutting it: but the case was now different; I was a husband and a father, and should not have ventured to marry, as *he* knew, had he not placed me in a position which entitled me to ask and receive such a blessing as a wife like Harriet.

Yet Harriet would have married me for myself alone,—nay, she had proved her sincerity upon that point by subjecting herself to trials and difficulties with a devotion, and even heroism, not to be expected from one so young and so little knowing in the wide world's ways. What had been the expression of her sentiments upon this very subject a day or two before? I had anticipated what would happen, had touched upon it—exactly what might have been calculated upon—and then, after all, as she said, we could be happy in a smaller house, with a smaller establishment, to be supported on a smaller income. Well, then, why not at once fire the

train, return no answer to Mrs. Brandyball's fine, figurative, free-and-easy rigmarole, but write direct to my brother a letter of remonstrance, of reproach even, and endeavour, if possible, to rouse him to a sense of his own situation and of mine.

Of course I did not hastily put any scheme of this sort into execution, for—which, indeed, was one of the most painful parts of the business—I felt it absolutely necessary to consult Harriet, although confident of her acquiescence. Fuller says, “A good wife sets up a sail according to the keel of her husband's estate;” and I was certain that in all she had said upon the last occasion I took of mentioning my suspicions of Cuthbert's defection, she was as sincere and true as I had ever found her in all other matters; but it grieved me to be obliged to trouble her so far as even to grant her acquiescence. Nevertheless, *that* was my course, and I resolved to hold a council with her so soon as any intelligence arrived from Sniggs with regard to the boy, the nature of which might greatly influence

our decision, inasmuch as if the result were fatal, I still adhered to my determination of going to Bath.

It turned out, however, that for the present that resolution was not to be put in practice, for my bulletin announced that Tom, although not better than he was last night, was not worse, the fever had not more abated, and that in fact he was much the same. As this information portended no sudden catastrophe, it became the more necessary that I should decide upon the line I meant to adopt with regard to Mrs. Brandyball's despatch, which must be either answered somehow, or not answered at all, by return of post. I therefore rang for Foxcroft, in order to ascertain when I might present myself up-stairs to communicate with my better half upon the subject now nearest my heart.

The faithful handmaid, who seemed, from a sort of feminine regard for my gander-like condition, and a respect, as I thought, for my parental character, most amiably attentive to all my little wants and wishes during Harriet's

temporary absence from our domestic circle, informed me that I might be received forthwith, for that her mistress was sitting up, and expecting me. This sounded like music in my ears ; this first marked step in the progress towards her restoration to society, to her return to those familiar scenes which her presence cheered and enlightened, was a set-off to all the mortifications I had just experienced, and I bounded up stairs as if I had gained some new and important object, and beheld with a pleasure I cannot attempt to describe, the beloved of my heart ensconced in a huge armed chair, looking as calm, as pale, and as placid as “ Patience on a monument.” That she did smile at grief, personified by her much-disturbed husband, was no small addition to my gratification ; and the gentle kiss she bestowed upon me was of more value to me at the moment than the *accolade* of a Sovereign to an expectant courtier.

The slight flush which coloured her fair cheek after this “ chaste salute” gave new beauties to her countenance, and brought her back to my

view, just as she looked in other days, and when I little thought she ever would be mine, as we strolled in the rectorial shrubberies. A thousand recollections filled my mind, and I felt so happy that I dreaded to dissipate the bright vision by referring to the “order of the day,” and beginning to discuss the business for her opinion upon which I had sought her.

It was absolutely necessary that something should be decided upon; and I wished to obtain her judgment upon Mrs. Brandyball’s letter and its contents, free and unbiassed by any thing I might say or suggest; and therefore having prepared her for “bad news,” in order that she might be rather agreeably surprised than not when she had perused it, I placed the epistle before her, and begged her calmly and quietly to read it through, while I proceeded to gaze upon my yet unchristianised boy, who lay sleeping in a swinging cot by the side of the maternal bed—and I had just fallen into a kind of reverie, in which my mind was filled by a thousand conflicting thoughts and anticipations as to the

destiny of the unconscious innocent before me, when the gentle tap of Foxcroft at the door produced the gentle “Come in” of her dear mistress.

“ If you please, Sir,” said the damsels, “ Mr. Kittington is in the breakfast-room, and wishes to speak to you.”

“ Who ?” said I.

“ The dancing-master, Sir,” said Foxcroft.

“ I dare say,” said Harriet, “ Cuthbert never recollects to have him paid.”

“ Most likely,” said I. “ Say I will be down directly.”

Foxcroft retired, smilingly, as was her wont.

“ Well,” said Harriet, “ I never read such a letter as this.”

“ How far have you read ?” said I.

“ To where she attributes Tom’s disorder to our servants,” said Harriet, “ and blames you for not writing to Cuthbert, when you did not know how to direct a letter to him.”

“ Ah,” said I, “ that’s nothing to what you will come to presently. All I beg of you is, to keep your temper, Harriet—don’t be in a passion

—treat it as I do, and all will be well. I don't wish to influence your judgment, dear, but I have made up *my* mind. I suppose my Terpsichorean visitor will not keep me long. I shall be back directly—then give me your opinion ;” saying which, I repeated the gentle kiss with which the council had opened, and proceeded to the breakfast-room, where I found Foxcroft kindly explaining to Mr. Kittington the peculiar beauty of what she called a “lovely gereenum,” which stood just inside the conservatory, which opened into the apartment.

Mr. Kittington appeared a little embarrassed at my appearance, as did Miss Foxcroft; but ladies or ladies' maids have always a command over themselves, and an aptitude for getting out of scrapes with a presence of mind most wonderful. The pump-shod professor coloured up “ruddier than the cherry,” and looked more embarrassed than usual; but Foxcroft, without moving a muscle of her countenance, no sooner saw me approach, than she let go the flower, upon which she was apparently lecturing, and

said, as if she had been told to wait till I arrived,
“Here is my master, Sir.”

They say that “they who live in glass houses should not throw stones.” There are two or three other things which people so circumstanced should not do; not that I mean to infer that lecturing upon “gereeenums” is one of them. Foxcroft however waggled her pretty little fantailed figure out of the room, and left Mr. Kittington and myself *tête-à-tête*.

“I beg your pardon, Sir,” said Kittington: “but I really am ashamed to trouble you—I—” Here he faltered, and looked silly again; “but I—”

“Pray don’t mention it,” said I: “I think I can almost guess—”

“Indeed, Sir,” said the dancing-master, “I assure you I would not have intruded upon you, but—”

I heard by anticipation the well-known sequel —“I have a very large amount to make up next week.”

“But the circumstances are very peculiar.”

Here he paused again.

"Pray don't apologise," said I, encouragingly; "my brother, Mr. Cuthbert Gurney, is so thoughtless and indolent, that these things are frequently occurring."

"Are you aware, Sir," said Kittington, "of the——"

"Oh, I know, of course," replied I; "there is no necessity for any delicacy between us, Mr. Kittington; my brother naturally expected to hear from you after your great attention to Kate and the others; but have you got it about you?"

"Yes, Sir," said Kittington, "I have brought it with me. Indeed, I had no other object in calling here; but I could not have imagined that you were aware of the existence of anything of the kind."

"Why, I guessed as much," said I; "but it is of no sort of consequence."

"Indeed! Sir," said Kittington.

"There can be no objection, I am sure," said I. "I will undertake to settle it without any

reference to my brother, who, as I have already said, is too indolent to take much trouble about anything."

"That is very surprising, Sir!" said Kittington; "I think you must be mistaken."

"No, no," said I, smiling, "the same thing has happened often before."

Kittington here appeared somewhat astounded, and wishing to relieve him from an embarrassment which seemed to me to be more particular than the occasion required, I begged him to hand me the "document," as I facetiously called his "bill," not liking the word, either as applied to myself or to anybody in the shape of a gentleman to whom I had to pay money.

"How far I should be justified in doing so, Sir," said Kittington, "I really do not know—my position is a very delicate one—and—really I am so overcome by the difficulty in which I am placed, or rather, in which I have placed myself, that I am scarcely able to proceed."

"I never saw," said I, "so much delicacy

on such a point. What scruples can you have in accepting what you must feel yourself justly to have acquired, and most richly to deserve? I am sure the way my niece Kitty has spoken to us of your attention and kindness fully justifies you in preferring your claims; so let us to business."

" My dear Sir," said Kittington, " the manner in which you meet this subject is to me most surprising, and confounds me more than all the rest. I merely attended Miss Falwasser and her sister, professionally—and—I—had no conception—she so extremely young—and—the fact is—I—really—I thought I was doing my duty in mentioning the fact—because I had no idea that you were aware—in truth I—difference of rank and position—and—besides, Sir, putting aside anything else, I—it is imperative I should mention that I am actually engaged to be married."

" Well, my dear Sir," said I, " I am very glad to hear it, and sincerely wish you joy; but I tell you again, there needs no such explanation. What your marrying has to do with a trifle like

this, a matter, no doubt, of everyday occurrence with gentlemen of your profession——”

“ My dear Sir,” said Kittington, turning alternately pale and red, “ indeed, indeed, it is no such thing: such matters do now and then happen; and waltzing, I confess between ourselves, is rather—a little conducive—but I assure you, I do not consider this by any means a trifling affair.”

“ Why,” said I, getting rather out of patience with the mock-modesty of my companion, “ what does it amount to, after all?”

“ Why, Sir,” said Kittington, “although when I took the liberty of sending in my name, my intention was, as in duty bound, that is, according to my own feelings, to have shown you the note: but as it is, it involves a compromise—and—”

“ Oh,” said I, “ I want no compromise.”

“ No, Sir,” said Kittington; “but I mean Miss Katharine Falwasser may——”

“ She!” exclaimed I; “ no, no, she wants no compromise, you may rely upon it; you have

only to ask and have ; there isn't a more liberal-hearted child in the world, whatever other faults she may possess."

" Child !" said Kittington ; " there you have used the very word—I said the difference of age between her, and——"

" And Jane," interrupted I ; " ah, there's a difference of age, but of course Jane would not interfere in such a matter as this."

" Oh, no," said Kittington, " I must do Miss Falwasser the justice to say, that she distinctly asserts that Miss Jane is totally ignorant of her sister's steps."

" Ah," said I, " that's a pity, as they learned together ; but Jane is not nearly so forward in anything as Kate."

" No, no," said Kittington, " very different characters ; but I really could not have imagined that you could have been aware of the circumstances, else, as I have just said, I should not have felt it necessary to call here, but have sent direct to Miss Falwasser herself."

" That's perfectly useless," said I ; " don't

worry yourself for a moment; I appreciate your delicacy, and if you will let me see the document as I call it, I think the settlement will be the affair of a few minutes."

"Well, Sir," said Kittington, "I have taken my line; I have been very much surprised at what has passed between us; I may be censured and laughed at by Miss Falwasser: it struck me I had only one course to pursue, and, having adopted that course, can have no hesitation in fulfilling my original intentions with a positive assurance that no human being, except ourselves, shall ever hear one syllable of the affair."

This speech, delivered with a degree of seriousness and earnestness for which I certainly was not prepared, and which the delivery of a dancing-master's bill for teaching, did not appear to me to require, was terminated by his handing me a glossy musk-smelling note, of delicate dimensions, which he drew from an envelope that he held in his hand.

I thought him somewhat of a dandy before,

but when I saw this odoriferous morsel make its way to the light, I set him down as the most consummate blockhead I ever met with. Having handed me the “document,” he threw himself into an armed chair with a “flump” very inconsistent with his usual manner of proceeding at Ashmead, and fixed his eyes upon me with an expression of interest and curiosity, which struck me as very remarkable. I opened the “bill” and read:—

“ I have struggled with my feelins ever since we parted; but I canot conqur them. You must have seen how intersting I have thought you for some time past. I never was happy but the days you were combing, and even Jane said I was in love with you—you must know the same. I am very young, but older than I look for—I am, I know, more than sixteen; for I heard my governess say that my mamma made us out all two years younger than we really are, in order, poor dear thing, to seem younger herself. Jane

does not know of this letter ; but I have persuaded pappy that nobody can teach us to dance like you, and he is quite ready you should. If you would make believe you were coming to settle at Bath, you might come and call, and I know dear Mrs. Brandyball would have you here, and then, dear Henry—you see I know your dear name—I am sure pappy would not mind our being married, or if he did, we might helope, and when we came back after it was over he would forgive us in a minute.

“ Do, do come, dear Henry, and then we can walk out while pappy is playing chess ; and I can make Jane stay with him—do not be cross with me for this ; and if you answer me, direct to me under cover to Mrs. Brandyball, and then I shall get it safe—and do send me a lock of your hair—I do love red hair so—and say you will come. I do nothing but play ‘ The Opera Hat’ and ‘ Molly put the Kettle on,’ the last two tunes we danced to. They have a stupid dancing-mistress at Montpelier. I never dance now—and never shall—never will—no, nor

sleep either till you come. Do come, do dear Henry,

“ Yours affectionately,
“ You can guess who.

“ P.S. I shall have a hundred thousand pounds
when pappy dies.”

“ Mr. Kittington,” said I, throwing down this precious epistle, “ I have a thousand apologies to make to you. I had, of course, no conception of an event like this, and, of course, could not appreciate either the honourable course you have adopted, or the agitation under which, as it appeared to me, you were unnecessarily labouring; it is needless, for me to say that I am totally unacquainted with anything concerning the proceedings of this extraordinary girl, and confined my speculations to some habitual neglect of my brother in not settling your account for tuition; but this is a blow which I was not prepared for, and yet—”

“ The blow, Sir,” said Kittington modestly but firmly, as if conscious of the rectitude of

his conduct at the sacrifice of some *éclat*, “is, I trust, avoided. Of course I shall return no answer to the young lady’s letter, however flattering her youthful admiration may be; I resign it to you, and with it, all pretensions to any further consideration from her. I will now admit to you that I am under no matrimonial engagement; but that when I found you, as I imagined, lending yourself to an arrangement so entirely unsuitable in all its points and bearings, I ventured to put a conclusive negative upon it by what perhaps you will admit to have been a justifiable exaggeration. I am aware that there is something ludicrous associated in society with the exercise of my profession; but I trust that the adoption of that profession from necessity rather than choice, for the support of an aged mother and unmarried sister, the widow and daughter of a gentleman, whose indulgence to his spoiled and helpless son left him no means of a livelihood but by the exercise of the only calling for which he was qualified, has not stifled the feelings of

honour which that indulgent father did not fail to implant in his heart. Sir, I am deeply affected by what has occurred. I need not say that no syllable of this will be breathed by me; exonerate me only from having in any way induced this unfortunate sentiment on the part of the young lady, which, in the course of sixmonths, will fade away and take some brighter hue. If you think I have acted justly, I am satisfied."

"Sir," said I, much moved by his manner and evident sincerity, "you have acted up to the character which you have inherited. Permit me to offer you my hand, and to assure you how sincerely I am—as we all must be—indebted to you for what you have done."

"Aware," said Kittington, "of the feelings which this disclosure must have naturally excited in your breast, I will no longer intrude—I leave the letter with you, and——"

"Nay," said I, "stay; take some luncheon—let me beg of you to stay."

"No," said Kittington, "I must not stay—I have pupils to attend at one; and you may

judge, Mr. Gurney, what the trials of a man, professing any of the lighter arts, must be, when you know that I have to devote the next two hours to teaching children to dance, while the mother, of whom I have just spoken to you, is lying on a bed of sickness and, I fear, of death. My heart, however, will be easier for what I have done this day; and, although the thoughtless Miss Falwasser may laugh at or despise me, I never shall regret the just course I have adopted."

I could make no reply. I again shook hands with him cordially, and resolved—no matter what.—I rang the bell, and he left me—and left me with a new difficulty upon my hands, and one which appeared to me to be insurmountable. It was a web so complex, so intertwined, and interlaced, that I could not imagine what was to be done. It was clear that Mrs. Brandyball had lent herself to a scheme which she hoped would detach Cuthbert's greatest favourite from him eternally. The letter was to be directed under cover to *her*. If, therefore, I made a confidence

with that hateful woman, she would instantly betray me to Kate. If I condescended to enter upon the subject with Kate herself, which really, considering her age, either computed or ascertained, I could not bring myself to do, she would at once fall into a fit of rage against the dastardly dancing-master, who in so base and cowardly a manner had boasted of her affections at the moment of rejecting them ; and if I approached Cuthbert himself, the very idea of charging his beloved daughter, as he called her, poor fellow ! with such an attack, would have toppled me down instantaneously from the slippery ledge of his favour on which I so equivocally stood at present.

I half wished that Kittington had not been so honourable, and that he had run away with the girl : that would have opened Cuthbert's eyes, and then, perhaps, we could have fixed the confederacy upon Mrs. Brandyball, and so have blown up (as poor Tom would liked to have done) the whole faction. But this was selfish. Kittington had behaved admirably : no fault could

be found with him : but only conceive what an addition to all the difficulties with which the answer to the letter left for Harriet's perusal this incident was ! It must be noticed. It could not die away. Kate would not rest content without some sort of acknowledgment of her address to her "golden-haired preceptor."

There was one striking characteristic in her *billet-doux* which rendered the girl less amiable than anything else ; the love part of the affair was not in my mind the worst ; the feeling which I hated throughout the whole appeal was the total carelessness and callousness with regard to everything but self, which pervaded every line. As for her affectionate pappy, he was only spoken of as being easily deceived, easily imposed upon, and to leave her a fortune at his death. Her sister Jane was only noticed as being fixed as a substitute at the chess-table while she and her lover were out walking ; and as for her dying brother, not one syllable was bestowed on him, although the letter was going to the place where he lay on a bed of sickness.

I can forgive excess of passion, I can pardon an excessive warmth of heart—but cold, calculating selfishness I cannot endure, and selfishness in a girl of fifteen or even seventeen is so unnatural a vice that it is doubly hateful.

Well, up stairs I went, with my head whirling, determined not, in the first instance, to mention what had occurred: for, in fact, I was so little resolved how to act, that I held it prudent to keep this new episode in our family history a secret at present even from Harriet.

Contrasted with the scene just ended below was that which I beheld on entering my wife's room above. I had never beheld her angry before; but angry she was; and having been left by herself during my interview with Kittington to brood over her anger, was really quite animated. It was, however, of the gentlest nature of rage, and in its highest paroxysms never rose to fever heat. Woman-like, however, she disdained the idea of any longer affecting civility or even toleration as regarded Mrs.

Brandyball, or of submitting for any ulterior consideration to her imperious sway. The reference to matters of our domestic economy, which were so strictly confidential, seemed to irritate my poor love more than anything, and the dictation about the wine and the wine-merchant, “so insolent!” “so impertinent!” “What business could Cuthbert have to tell *her*?” “As for his not recollecting whether my baby was a boy or a girl, I am glad of it,” said Harriet. “He—though he is your brother—should not be its godfather, if it never had a godfather.”

“Mercy on us, Harriet!” said I, laughing at the earnestness of her half-whispered rage: “why, where have you cherished all this volcanic fire which you are pouring out upon poor Cuthbert?”

“Poor Cuthbert!” said Harriet: “I wish, my dear Gilbert, he had been poor Cuthbert—we should then have been humbler, and happier, and independent.”

“Never mind, my dear girl,” said I; “re-

collect we can always fall back upon that—

‘With thee conversing I forget all time.
All seasons, and their change—all please alike.’

I care as little or less than you for what are called the world’s luxuries; but I do care for a brother’s love. I lament the loss of that, and I think I ought to make a struggle to regain it.”

“Why should you have lost it, Gilbert?” asked Harriet, naturally enough. “We did all we could to make him happy—unfortunately my approaching confinement prevented my showing Mrs. Brandyball so much attention as I otherwise would; but, as for Kate and——”

“Hah!” said I, involuntarily.

“I am sure all the children had their way,” continued my poor wife.

“Yes, they have had their way too much,” replied I: “but looking back is useless. The question is, how we are to act upon this letter? I know exactly, by the tenor of your conversation, the course you would pursue; but there are various things to be considered—more now

than before—every hour adds new difficulties—new events transpire—in short, confusion seems worse confounded."

"Now, then," said Harriet, starting from her languid, listless attitude, "I know what Mr. Kittington has been here about."

I stared with astonishment.

"What," said I, with affected surprise, "can Mr. Kittington's calling here have to do with our decision upon that letter?"

"Everything, Gilbert," said Harriet, shaking her head, as much as to deprecate my efforts at mystification. "It won't do, Gilbert; she has written him a love-letter."

"Why, Harriet," said I, thrown off my guard completely, "that girl Foxcroft has been listening."

"Not she, upon my honour, that I know of," said Harriet; "and I am not particularly grateful to you for supposing that I should pick up information by any such means; however, you have let out the secret, which was no secret to me; for although I was ignorant of the actual fact,

I had seen enough of Miss Kitty's conduct to the man to be quite prepared for such an event. So, then, we shall afford conversation for the whole county."

"No, love, no," said I; "you have, with all a woman's prescience, hit upon the truth; but the secret is safe in the keeping of Mr. Kittington."

"Is that likely?" said Harriet.

"I will pledge my honour," said I; "but let me implore you to be equally cautious—not even to your mother drop a hint of the circumstance. The disclosure has laid a new load of difficulties upon us, and what is to be done must form a new feature of our present debate. Here is the precious epistle, in which the advantages of a brilliant boarding-school education develope themselves, not only in the expression of feelings and sentiments suited to other ages and stations than those of Miss Kitty, but in occasional orthographical slips, which prove, as Foote said of the "Agoos" which were "kurd hear," that the young ladies' fascinations are not spells.

Upon my life the thing is so ridiculous that I cannot bring myself to be serious, however serious in point of fact the consequences may be."

Saying which I tossed the odoriferous *morceau* into her lap, and watched her as she read it.

"Exactly what I expected," said Harriet, as she laid down the note. And it appeared that her intuitive apprehension of the course likely to be pursued by Miss Kitty Falwasser was in some degree strengthened by the accounts which little —now growing big—Bettina—the amiable Betsy Wells—gave of the young lady's conversation and remarks upon "men and things," which were carried on and made in terms and in a tone that startled poor Betsy, but who, being two or three years older, used to listen to them, in order, as she told her sisters, to endeavour to correct her junior's morals and amend her taste. I remember to have heard of a nobleman who engaged a governess in France who could not speak a word of English, in order that his daughter, whom he placed under her care, should learn French,

through the acknowledged impossibility of speaking to the young preceptress in any other language. The plan did not however succeed to the fullest extent, for the young lady, preferring her native tongue, continued to speak it until the French governess had learnt it, when the necessity for their conversing in any other, ceased. Whether any similar effect was to be dreaded from Betsy Wells's attempts at the inculcation of morality and steadiness into Miss Kitty's mind, I do not pretend to say.

“ Well, then,” said Harriet, “ it seems to me that we cannot possibly get out of all our difficulties, so let us give it up at once ; send this charming letter to Cuthbert, and let him see the real merits and virtues of his delightful adopted daughter-in-law, and——”

“ No, no,” said I ; “ recollect we have poor Tom under our charge—let us not hastily overthrow the fabric of family affection. Cuthbert has been duped and imposed upon, but all his feelings are kindly——”

“ To others, Gilbert,” said Harriet.

“ Not so only,” replied I, for I could not overcome my brotherly feeling on the instant; “ he has done much for me, and will do more. I must consider before I act: he has left a boy here whom he dearly loves.”

“ What a taste !” said Harriet.

“ We must not judge of hearts by tastes, Harriet,” said I. “ Cuthbert feels bound to poor Tom Falwasser for his mother’s sake, and tenderness in a step-father cannot be accounted a vice. No, I must wait and hear how the lad is, and then——”

“ And then, my dear Gilbert,” said Harriet, “ only recollect that whatever our feelings may be towards your brother, we are not to be subjected to the government of Mrs. Brandyball.”

“ There it is,” said I.

“ And as for Kate,” added my wife, “ if this affair is kept from him, and anything goes wrong with her afterwards, who will be blamed?— Why, you, my dear Gilbert, because you did not give him warning of her earlier proceedings.”

" That's true," said I, " very true. But if I can send him good news of the boy, and prove to him our solicitude on his account, I am sure—although, as this woman says, he feels now a little hurt—unreasonably, I admit—at my silence, which was unavoidable—he will come round, and all will be well; and as for Kate——"

Here Foxcroft's tap summoned me to the door. I went.

" Jim, the groom-boy, wants to speak to you, Sir; he is just run up from Mr. Sniggs."

" Oh!" said I; and leaning over the balustrades, called to the lad to come to me.

" Well," said I, " what's the message?"

" Whoy, Zur," said Jem, stepping close up to me, and whispering, " Mr. Sniggs's compliments—if you please, Zur, MASTER TOM'S DEAD!"

CHAPTER IV.

THIS intelligence, for which I certainly was by no means prepared, lost none of its effect by the tone and manner in which it was communicated by the boy. The suddenness with which all the hopes Sniggs had encouraged were dissipated, and a fatal result produced, added greatly to my sorrow and regret. In an instant every prospect was changed, and every proposition which I had suggested to myself as to my future conduct in my really trying and difficult situation altered. The worst that I had anticipated had happened at a moment when I did not expect it, and the darkness of my fate

acquired new gloom from the contrast it afforded to the gleam of expectation produced by the apothecary's last note and bulletin.

"Is Mr. Sniggs coming here?" said I to the boy, when I had sufficiently recovered my composure to speak.

"Ees, Zur," said the boy; "he be a-laying Master Tom out, I think; and when he ha done that, Doctor says he'll step up and tell ye all about it."

The combination of ideas which flashed into my mind; the association of the painful duty, of which the groom spoke so carelessly, with Sniggs's subsequent visit to Ashmead, and my continued dread of the infection, made me shudder; and I could have killed the fellow for having been so communicative upon a point so painful. He evidently saw nothing in his narrative calculated to excite any particular sensation on my part. His feelings were purely animal; and if it be true, as the naturalists tell us, that animal feeling is proportionably more or less acute according to the size of the animal itself, it is likewise

equally true that mental sensibility decreases, in the exact ratio of enlightenment and civilization.

Shakspeare's doctrine, most beautiful to inculcate, infers no difference between the dying pains of a giant and those of a beetle ; and if we have successfully controverted that humane opinion, we may surely be allowed to doubt whether the loss of a parent, child, or friend, equally affects the educated and refined portion of society and the rude, unlearned, and coarser classes of which my west-country rustic was one. I saw no sign of sorrow or of sympathy about him : he knew the boy was dead, and he knew that he must be buried—so did I ; but with me the certainty of both events did not blunt the edge of their severity.

I dismissed the groom from further parlance, and returned to Harriet, who seemed less surprised than I expected when I announced the catastrophe. Tears started into her eyes; but she was too ingenuous and too artless to conceal from me the fact that her distress was occasioned

rather by the anticipation of what might be the consequences of the boy's death as connected with *me*, than by the event itself.

"What a thing to happen at such a time!" said she, "and to happen from the thoughtlessness or carelessness of the people to whose special care he was confided."

"Upon that point, Harriet," I replied, "it is not worth while to waste a thought; it may or may not be *that* which has produced this result; but, after all, nobody could have foreseen that a boy of his age would, under the circumstances, have done so mad a thing: that, however, is over and past recall, and the less said about it the better; for, if Cuthbert once heard of it, the fate of the unhappy Sniggs and his wife would be sealed. Let us consider what is now to be done: I suppose my original intention had better be put into execution—I had better start for Bath and break the affair to Cuthbert myself?"

"I don't know," said Harriet; "Papa always says, never be the bearer of bad news."

"Yet," said I, "it is impossible to write this history—what can I—what ought I to do?"

"Consult papa," said Harriet; "the stories which he tells of himself in early life justify you in applying to him. He never was at a loss—"

"True," said I; "but then he never was placed in such an extraordinary predicament. How I wish, my dear girl, that Cuthbert had not met me at Gosport, and that you and I had gone——"

"Where," said Harriet—for the sound sense of a woman always prevails—"where should we have gone to?—to a place which he had left and then we should have had to come——"

"Bock again," said I, "as the Scotchman said when his leg was over the man's wall—that's true; and bad as things look, my girl, I will still cling to my creed, and say everything is for the best. I'll go——"

"That will be for the worst," said Harriet; "you have never left me since we were married—I can't bear your absence."

“ Psha !” said I. “ An affair of three days, or four at most.”

“ Yes,” said Harriet, “ the time seems short ; but only recollect what is to happen during that period : what events are to be told—what effects to be produced ; your brother, if left to himself, would, I have no doubt, be as reasonable as he is, I believe, affectionate ; but worked upon by active, artful people, depend upon it, my dear Gilbert, the whole thing will be misrepresented and——”

“ I am quite aware of *that*,” said I ; “ but the question to be considered is, whether my personal presence and a *vivâ voce* description of what has happened would not conduce more to his tranquillisation than a letter : the letter, recollect, would be open to the review and criticism of the whole crew—Mrs. Brandyball leading the van. If I *go*, I am there myself to explain, and describe, and modify. I had better go.”

I saw that Harriet still thought I had better not. However, considering that during my

absence she would be surrounded by her own family and occupied in attending to mine—if the word could be applicable to one little baby—I felt less difficulty in leaving her, the more especially as my stay at Cuthbert's would be so extremely short.

My deliberations and consultations, however, were broken in upon by the arrival of Sniggs, the announcement of whose name in connexion with the duty which, according to the groom-boy's account, he had been performing, produced something like a shudder on my frame, but whom, of course, it was most essential I should see. I accordingly went down stairs, and am almost ashamed to own how unwillingly; suffice it to say, without attempting to describe them, that my feelings, whatever they were, were by no means moderated by seeing both my pet dogs worrying about and sniffing the worthy apothecary's clothes, as if they were aware of the presence of an odour which might breathe infection in my yet untainted house. I drove them out of the room with an abruptness of manner and

severity of tone very unusual with me in my intercourse with dumb animals.

"Well, Sir," said Sniggs, "this is a sad business; I had hoped better things: however, it is a consolation to myself and Mrs. Sniggs to know that everything was done that could be done."

Yes, thought I, and something more than need have been done.

"I never saw an instance where fever increased so rapidly—it was irresistible—an effusion of blood on the brain terminated the struggle. Poor fellow! he suffered greatly during the night and became delirious, and at the last was quite unconscious of what was passing—when will he be buried, Sir?"

"That is a matter upon which I can say nothing till I have seen my brother," said I.

"You propose going to him, then?" said Sniggs.

"I think so."

"Because," continued the apothecary, "it struck *me* that, perhaps, having had charge of

him, having attended him, and watched him through the progress of the disease, it might have been, in some degree, consolatory and satisfactory to Mr. Gurney if I were to go to him myself: I could explain more correctly and minutely the circumstances of the case, and——”

“ But,” said I, “ your patients here !”

“ Oh,” said Sniggs, “ I can arrange all that —my friend Pillman would take charge of *them*; besides, my own assistant is perfectly able to do that. This is no time for joking ; but you know what Pillman said to the bishop who refused to ordain him, because he was not properly qualified——

“ He said, ‘ my lord, I regret this refusal more for the sake of others than myself—it may cause the death of hundreds.’ ‘ How so, Sir ?’ said the bishop. ‘ Why, my lord,’ replied Pillman, ‘ If I do not get into the church, I must follow my father’s profession, and practise physic.’ ”

Sniggs, I fancy, saw in the expression of my countenance that I did not particularly admire

the tone and manner of his conversation at such a moment; for he suddenly threw an extra proportion of grief into his strange-looking features, and inquired in a mournful tone whether I approved of his proposal.

It struck me that it would be an exceedingly good plan; but I determined not to sanction it without further consultation in the family cabinet. It was not difficult to discover divers and sundry reasons why the active son of *Æsculapius* was both ready and willing to undertake the expedition. In the first place he would show his anxiety and sympathy; in the second, he would explain the case more favourably for himself, carefully concealing, no doubt, the episode of the cherry-brandy, which as I felt, although I did not admit, had mainly contributed to the catastrophe; and, in the third place, his extra attention and rapid journey, to the manifest prejudice and neglect of all his other patients, would give him a substantial claim upon Cuthbert's liberality, which, after the melancholy termination of the boy's illness, might probably require some powerful stimulants in the way of counteracting

the grief and disappointment of the hopes he had entertained of the apothecary's skill.

"Well," said I, "I will go and talk this over with Mrs. Gurney; and if we agree in thinking your scheme available, when shall you be ready to start?"

"In an hour," said Sniggs. "I have given all the necessary orders with respect to the body, and every thing will go on perfectly well in my absence, subject to such instructions as Mr. Gurney may give me, which, of course, I shall hurry back to fulfil."

"Will you wait five minutes?" said I.

"I am at your orders," replied Sniggs. "I don't know whether it is quite luncheon time, but if it is—and I assure you I am deuced hungry—hav'n't had time to eat a morsel this morning—and you are for my going, I would take a snack, which would save time, and I could order horses as I went by the King's Head, and so come round here for your letter."

"Luncheon you shall have," said I, not entirely forgetting what his morning's occupations

had been, and wondering only that they should be in any degree conducive to a good appetite.

I ordered the luncheon to be hurried, and went up-stairs to Harriet.

It was a rule in the navy in war time, and which I believe is sometimes observed in a period of profound peace, that a captain of a man-of-war was never to sail with his wife on board his ship, inasmuch as, aware of the tremendous and overwhelming influence of women, the Admiralty thought her presence might shake the bravest of men, and that the sight of her anxieties and sufferings for *him* personally might unnerve the strongest mind that the disposition of Providence ever assigned to humanity. By a parity of reasoning, in a matter of infinitely inferior importance I ought not to have consulted Harriet, whose anxiety for my remaining at home had been already so decidedly manifested, upon the delicate question of staying or going to Cuthbert; still I had such perfect confidence in her ingenuousness, and so strong a conviction of the entire disinterestedness of

women, when the results were not likely to be vitally serious to a beloved object (as I flattered myself I was) that I forthwith repaired to my better half, stated the proposal of Sniggs, and asked her what she thought of it.

It was quite superfluous to wait for her answer —at least in words; the bright sparkle of her eye, and the delight which beamed in her countenance told me her opinion; and I believe she was perfectly right; the more readily, perhaps, because I had already made up my mind to the judiciousness of the new arrangement. So far, so good; but as she expressed a desire that I should communicate with her father, I agreed to wait until he could be summoned into council.

Now, as luck would have it, although events seldom turn up propitiously, who should walk himself into the hall of Ashmead just at this critical juncture but Wells; and, to say truth, pleased as I always was to see and welcome him to my home, I never was more gratified by hearing that he had arrived, and joined Sniggs in the dining-room, where *à l'ordinaire* the noon-tide board had been spread.

“ Nothing can be better,” said Wells, after having heard the proposition; “ write, my dear Gilbert, such a letter as your heart will dictate; let our friend be its bearer, and then only consider the weight that his description of the pains and care which have been taken in poor Tom’s case will have with your brother, already greatly prepossessed in his favour.”

“ Exactly so,” said Sniggs. “ I know every turn and shade of the disease—have minutely watched each change—made minutes of the prognosis—all down in black and white—and I think Mr. Gurney will have every reason to be satisfied with my conduct.”

“ Besides,” said Wells to me, in one of the windows to which we had retired, “ you will get rid of the necessity of alluding to other subjects to which, if you went, you must unquestionably refer.”

I looked innocent.

“ I mean about the dancing-master,” said Wells. “ You could not see Cuthbert or the girl without touching upon *that*.”

“ What ?” said I.

“ Pshaw !” said Wells ; “ what’s the use of making those ‘damnable faces?’ as Shakspeare has it. I know all. You have a wife ; so have I : do you suppose such a story could be shaken in a family colander without running through ? Mum ! not a another word : the world say that a secret is a great thing for one, a charming thing for two, and nothing for three ; but we are tiled. I know, and it goes no farther : but you could not, I repeat—it would be impossible, and if not impossible, in the highest degree improper, for you to see your brother without telling him the whole of that business. What wquld be the consequence ? A split either between Kitty and you, or Cuthbert and you. Let well alone. You have no business to go out of your way to interfere : here the opportunity offers ; nothing can be more attentive or respectful than that the medical man who has attended the boy should instantly proceed to the man who engaged his attentions, in order to report the state of the case. The responsibility

is entirely shifted from your shoulders; and while this manifestation of deep interest is made by the person immediately employed, the expression of your own feelings will come with double force. I would," added Wells, " tell him how readily you would obey the slightest intimation on *his* part of a wish to see you. If he desired you to visit him, you would go, the road smoothed, the great difficulty overcome; he would know the painful truth not from *you*, and be delighted to enjoy your society, as calculated to soothe his wounded feelings."

"I am quite prepared to adopt the plan," said I, "not only because I like it myself, but because it meets with your concurrence. So be it, then. I will sit down and write such a letter as I feel I ought to write, and Sniggs shall carry the intelligence and describe the particulars, take all his directions as to the funeral, and return forthwith to obey them. We are agreed, Sniggs," said I, leaving the recess in which our colloquy had taken place; "You *shall* go, tell your own history, and come back with all the necessary

instructions ; and assure my brother, besides what I shall write, that I will take care that every wish that he expresses shall be realized to the letter."

Sniggs seemed greatly elated by the decision, and somewhat invigorated by three or four glasses of wine, and two ditto of not particularly weak ale, with which he had washed down his luncheon, expressed what really did not seem an unreasonable wish, that, if I did not particularly want my chariot, my lending it to him would very much accelerate his journey, inasmuch as it would obviate the delay of changing chaises.

" Sniggs is right," said Wells ; " the fact that he comes in your carriage will exhibit a new proof to Cuthbert of the interest you take in the business. Quite right—that is it."

" And," said Sniggs, " there is one word more I would say—we are among friends—and I have no difficulty in saying that—upon my life, I hardly know how to mention it either—but, the truth is, that I have not at command enough——"

" Oh !" said I, stopping him, " of course, you

are to be at no charge for this trip ; it is business, and business of ours. No, no ! I'll arrange all that. You shall have that point settled immediately." And I accordingly went to my library and drew a check for forty pounds which I begged him to get cashed at the bank (for we *had* a bank at Blissfold), and appropriate as much of the amount as was necessary to defray the charges of the journey.

" Liberal soul !" said Sniggs of me to Wells, as he afterwards told me ; " by Jove, Sir, he ought to be the rich brother of the two, and will, I conclude, eventually be so. Wonderful to see how wealth and stinginess go hand in hand. You know those people who sit just over you at church—the girls with green pelisses and red bonnets, like a little pair of parroquets who can't live single—the Kurmichens ;—their father, when he was alive, was the stingiest dog going ;—cellars full—binns topped up—and all that—never gave any wine after dinner—but went on like a house in the Old Town of Edinburgh, story upon story, to save his claret—never could get him to bleed.

So one day giving a description of a friend of his who had fallen blind in consequence of consulting a celebrated oculist, he said, ‘Gad, Sir ! Buggins is as blind as a beetle—can’t see any more than that bottle.’ Whereupon one of the visitors, a wag of the first water, said, ‘Then our cases are exactly alike, Sir, for we can see no more than that bottle ; we wish we could.’ He ! he ! that’s not bad.”

“ On the contrary,” said Wells ; “ but I don’t believe Gurney’s brother is at all parsimonious. All that I fear is his being led away—influenced to turn his liberality into channels which ought never to have been dug—that Mrs. Brandyball——”

“ Mum !” said Sniggs ; “ I know a good deal about her—more than I ever thought I should. People *will* talk—and there *is* a person in Bliss-fold who knew the husband’s nephew—not that ever I peep or pry—I never poke *my* nose into other people’s concerns—but one can’t stop his ears, and I receive—however, it is no affair of mine.”

"I cannot help thinking," said Wells, "that she *has* a great influence over Mr. Gurney."

"Influence!" said Sniggs: "you have no notion what she is, if what I am obliged to hear is true. However, Mr. Wells, my maxim is to listen to all, and say nothing, and therefore I hope to stand well with all parties."

Wells made one of his acquiescent bows, which went for little; for although he himself had been quieted down by time, the crack of the whip was not more familiar to the old coachman's ear, than were the professions made by the worthy apothecary of a total disinclination from the failing of tittle-tattle, or of the still more important crime of scan-mag.

"Of course," said Wells, "you will represent our good friend Gilbert's conduct in a proper light. The fact is, that we could not pay any immediate personal attention to the poor lad——"

"Nor was any necessary," said Sniggs, warming with the subject and the sherry. "I declare, Mr. Wells, that not a thing was left

undone that could be done to save him. His constitution had been undermined by previous indulgence—he was a self-willed boy, too—and his diet had been loosely attended to; or rather, his appetite had been gratified at the cost of his health ever since he came to England. More lives are lost, and more constitutions destroyed, by a reckless indulgence in early youth than by any other things in the world. However, poor lad, he is gone. I suppose Mr. Gurney will have a tablet put up in the church to his memory. If so, I shall venture to recommend Clipstone. You know Clipstone, Sir?"

"Yes," said the rector; "who lives opposite the Plough."

"Exactly, Sir," said Sniggs. "Valuable family—very estimable people—always ailing. Wife, Mrs. C., never well—camphorated julep and concomitant brandy-and-water; eldest daughter epileptic—powders incessantly; the son hepatitis—calomel *ad libitum*; Elizabeth slight touch of scrofula—calls it rheumatism—do what

I can ; the two younger boys mal-conformation of chest. Father excellent man—full of talent—with a taste in tombstones quite remarkable. I think he will do a smart slab for Tom, on the most moderate terms."

Considering that poor Tom, for whose smart slab Sniggs was in his own mind bargaining, had been dead some few hours only—the conversation struck Wells as somewhat abrupt and even premature ; but the fact was, that Sniggs, having obtained, or being about to obtain, his credentials for the mournful embassy upon which he was going, and moreover having the promise of means to grease the wheels of my carriage on the journey, totally cast off the grief which he at first felt it his duty to assume, and which it is, as I have before observed, scarcely reasonable to expect a medical man in tolerable practice really to feel. Indeed, if he *did* feel strongly during the progress of a disease, his judgment might be affected by that very sensibility, and he might be rendered incapable of doing his duty steadily

and fearlessly—a point most essential under such circumstances.

It was about this period of the conversation, as Wells afterwards told me, that I re-entered the dining-room, and put into Sniggs's hand the check of which I had spoken. In consequence of my lending him my carriage, the horses were to be ordered up to Ashmead, and he was to return, after having had his portmanteau and *sac de nuit* packed, and sent up by his footboy with the pale face and glazed hat, and to start from my door in an hour from the then present time, which hour I was to devote to the concoction of my letter to Cuthbert.

About half past two, Sniggs armed with his check, departed, and Wells, who never could resist a joke—not unseemly to his cloth—directed my attention to the uncertain course taken by the worthy apothecary from the hall-door down towards the gates of Ashmead—there was an unconscious adherence to the line of beauty which would have delighted Hogarth himself. Whether the elevation of our practi-

tioner was attributable more to the draught he had swallowed, or the draft which he had deposited in his pocket, we did not attempt to ascertain. Certain it was, that in the midst of his sorrow for Tom, he was happy for himself, and I have no doubt saw before him a bright prospect of patronage and support from my poor dear brother—whose most sanguine hopes he had frustrated, by lending his involuntary aid to the removal, from this sublunary world of troubles, of Master Thomas Falwasser.

As soon as he was clear of the lodge, I sat down and wrote what I thought the best possible letter to my brother—expressing our united griefs at the sad event, and referring him for particulars to the bearer. I entreated him to let me know what he wished me to do with regard to the necessary ceremonies to be performed, and assured him that his directions should be fulfilled to the letter. I made all proper inquiries after the two young ladies, and desired my best compliments to Mrs. Brandyball, whose letter I should have answered, had

not the melancholy occurrence changed the whole course of events. I made Harriet join in the kindest remembrances to him, with a proper proportion of condolence, and her best regards to his daughters, as he called, and, I believe, really fancied them; and at last obtained her permission to send a civil message to the gentle B. herself. This, I admit, was extracted; but as I argued that it was as well to be at peace with all, at such a season, Harriet at last complied.

In less than an hour the horses came—the Sniggs boy, with the trunk and bag, and the Sniggs himself, dressed in deep mourning, with a four inch crape round his hat, and a face to match. I had a few minutes' *tête-à-tête* conversation with him, in which I stated my wishes as to the manner in which he should explain most clearly how totally I had been incapacitated from paying any personal attentions to poor Tom, and wound up our dialogue by saying to him, “I think, Mr. Sniggs, you had better not say anything about the cherry-brandy.”

"Not a word," said Sniggs, looking excessively foolish.

This parting admonition I considered a masterpiece of policy, inasmuch as, if he did not pursue the exact course I had laid down for him in his conversation with Cuthbert, it reminded him that I had the fact in store to overthrow all his professions of unremitting attention to his amiable patient.

Before the clock struck four the carriage was ready, and all his traps being disposed of, in and about the vehicle, the excellent apothecary deposited himself in the inside, and the palefaced urchin with the glazed hat having mounted into the rumble, away they drove to my inexpressible delight in having been so strangely delivered from what could not have failed to be the most painful and embarrassing expedition I had ever undertaken.

When the traveller was out of sight I proceeded to Harriet to announce the fact of his departure, and to deliberate upon the probable

issue of his expedition, and then I found that Fanny and her lover had quarrelled; the cause of their quarrel I concluded was trifling, and, believing in the certainty of the consequences of the *iræ amantium*, I merely smiled at the absurdity of their “fall out,” as Miss Foxcroft would have called it.

“My dear Harriet,” said I, “we have enough upon our hands at present with our own affairs, do not let us meddle with those of others; rely upon it the hostile parties will, before the day is over, make it up, kiss, and be friends again.”

“I doubt that,” said Harriet. “The cause of their difference I do not yet know; but Fanny hints at its being something important, and she is not a girl to take offence unreasonably or hastily. Papa is not in the least aware of it, whatever it is: however, this evening she will be here, and I shall know the particulars.”

“I tell you, Harriet,” said I, “before this evening comes the quarrel will be over, so let us talk of matters more immediately interesting. It strikes me that Cuthbert will wish poor Tom

to be buried somewhere near his present residence, which, I think seems likely to be a permanent one; in that case I shall, of course consider it my duty to accompany his remains. My meeting with Cuthbert will, however painful, be less irksome than it would be at present, inasmuch as he will be acquainted with all the melancholy facts of the case."

" You must act as your judgment dictates," said Harriet, " and according to circumstances. My belief is, that he is so completely under the influence of Mrs. Brandyball, that it will be to her that we shall have to look for instructions."

" I have no doubt," said I, " that her object will be to cast all possible blame upon *us*; and certainly, if am likely to be subjected to any censure from Cuthbert in *her* presence or under *her* suggestion, I shall altogether abstain from visiting him, let the consequences be what they may."

It is hardly worth recording the various conversations which occurred between Harriet and myself upon this engrossing and embarrassing

topic. The tone and spirit of her observations and suggestions evinced a higher degree of indignation toward Cuthbert's weakness, and a greater restlessness under the weight of his previous favours, than I could induce myself to feel. To be sure, the tie of relationship which moderated *my* sentiments upon his extraordinary conduct was not binding upon *her*; but I must say I never expected to see her so much excited upon any serious subject as she was, whenever the dependency of our position made itself evident in the course of our discussions.

The windows of Ashmead were darkened, and the heavy bell of Blissfold church was tolled—a ceremony, by the way, originating in the grossest superstition, and in its performance fraught with the greatest evil. Those who merely take things as they come, and, like the mole, fancy they are very deep, when they are, in fact, close to the surface, consider the heavy swinging of the “passing bell” a matter of respect to the memory of the dead; whereas the object, if any there be, in making the dismal noise produced by

a hireling's pulling a rope in a belfry is to keep away devils, and imps, and spirits from interfering with the passage of the soul departed, in its flight towards heaven. The history of bells would fill more pages of my notes than I can spare—as it is, however, tolerably well known to the commonly enlightened, I regret that fact the less ; but of one thing I am quite certain—whatever benefit might have been supposed, in the days of Popery, to be derivable from tolling at so much per hour, the mischief done to society in Protestant countries, where we do not expect so much spiritual advantage from the process, is obviously grave and serious. A sick man lies on his bed within a few yards of a church-steeple ; in the wretchedness of his disorder he hears the hollow boom of the passing bell—“ Who’s dead ?” is his first natural question.—“ Poor Mr. Hawkins, Sir,” says the nurse. “ What did he die of ?” asks the patient, flickering out of life.—“ Of an abscess in the lungs,” says the communicative crone. Abscess of the lungs is the patient’s disorder ; every sound of

the bell produces upon his mind a new pang—a new excitement; and those who know how intimately the mind and body are connected must know what the effect producible by this reiteration of the deathly evidence will be. With women under more delicate and trying circumstances its fatality has been established. Reform it altogether.

However, the bell was tolled; and because Master Thomas Falwasser was a young gentleman, the big bell tolled. If he had been a poor child, no bell would have been tolled; if he had been one of what are called the middling classes, a smaller bell would have been tolled. But the big bell costs most to toll, inasmuch as Durandus tells us, it being so much louder than the others, the devils are obliged to keep farther away to be out of its sound. If this be not disgusting mockery, what is?—the ringing of bells at a wedding, if the people who pay the ringers delight in campanology, is all very well; and we suppose by the length of the peal, and the number of the bells, that no devils or imps will

dare to annoy the happy couple for a certain time. And *yet* look at the absurdity of *that*—to pay a set of strangers, men who have never heard your names before, and never will again, to make a joyous sound, in the joyousness of which they take no part, and for being enthusiastic in making which they get their two or three guineas, or less, as the case may be,—for that which renders the absurdity the greater is, that they are thus joyous only *ad valorem*, the length and strength of the spirit-stirring peal being uniformly proportioned to the amount disbursed.

To *my* ear the tolling was most discordant, and reminded me, as the sound ever did, of that which I first heard in hastening to Teddington to receive my poor kind mother's last blessing. The impression made upon me that morning never will, never can be effaced; and perhaps, after all, my rooted antipathy to bells has its origin in that occurrence.

The day passed on till dinner-time, the usual time of meeting in a family. My father-in-law and I dined *tête-à-tête*. Mrs. Wells and Fanny

were to come to Harriet in the evening—Lieutenant Merman was gone on a little excursion—for that I was prepared. Wells seemed unconscious of the reason of his absence, and I, really hating the disagreeable “son of Mars,” as he would be figuratively called by the gentlemen of the press, was glad to let him and all his turmoils sink into oblivion, while I still “harped,” as the immortal bard has it, upon the one subject nearest my heart.

“That Merman,” said the Rector, “is a very odd man, Gurney.”

“Is he?” said I.

“His violence is quite extraordinary upon the most ordinary occasions,” said Wells; “you know *me* pretty well—you know I give and take—all fair in conversation: and as I consider—nobody knows himself, to be sure—but, as I consider myself, I take myself to be an average good-humoured man. Well, yesterday, I was playfully discussing a variety of topics upon which he and I ordinarily disagree, and after vindicating institutions which he underrates and

viliifies, and maintaining principles which he ridicules, I happened to tell him an anecdote—you know I am not over particular upon such points—which occurred to myself when I was for a short time examining-chaplain to my excellent connexion and patron the Bishop. A young man came for examination, and it so happened that the Bishop had no Greek Testament at hand—the thing occurred in London—Bishop asked me—I had not one, and so, without saying anything more, I went and got hold of the first book I could find, and examined my young friend in Latin—he succeeded to my heart's content, but it so happened that the book was Lucian *De Morte Peregrini*, a tract which he wrote against Christianity. I told the thing as a joke, upon which this Merman drew up and looked grave, and went off to the women, and I have never seen him since. I believe, by Jove, that a man ought never to joke with a dullard ; he takes as inatter of fact that which is really matter of fun ;—and, rely upon it, Merman is an ass, though I say it, who shouldn't.”

"I had no idea," said I, "that the Lieutenant was strait-laced."

"Nor I," said Wells, "except in his uniform; nor does the history of his affair with Miss Maloney go quite smooth with me."

I saw by this reference to what had been a healed wound, that the Rector was what may be called "put out," and that Harriet, when she spoke of the seriousness of the difference between the Lieutenant and her sister, was not altogether wrong in treating it as a matter of importance.

"The gentleman," said Wells, "has marched himself off; and between you and me, Gilbert, if he never was to march himself back again, *I* should not much care."

"But," said I, "my dear Sir, matters seem to have gone so far now, and he has been so unequivocally received as one of the family, that——"

"Psha!" interrupted the Rector, "what of *that*? It requires time to know a man. His manner last night was extremely offensive to

me; and from what I afterwards saw in the drawing-room, I don't think that the sequel was much more agreeable to Fanny."

"Fanny," said I, "is a kind-hearted, ingenuous girl, and devoted to you: and if she thought that anything the Lieutenant said was meant to vex and annoy you, my belief is that she would seriously resent it."

"So do I," said Wells, "and—this is of course between ourselves—my notion is—I may be wrong—that the way in which he caught up a mere fact—a truth—a thing which did occur, but which I perhaps might as well not have repeated, except as I did repeat it under my own roof, and in what I considered my own family, is attributable to some new change in his affair with his aunt and the fortune; and that the indignation which he expressed at the mode in which he had been treated by the heiress, has been by some means or other modified and moderated, and that he is now anxious, late as it is in the course of our acquaintance to break off the connexion."

"If Fanny say Yea," exclaimed I, "let it be so—he is not the man to make any woman happy, and much less my sister-in-law."

"I have heard nothing," said Wells, "of what occurred between Fan and him. I merely spoke of his extraordinary conduct, and a determination on my own part not to submit to a line of behaviour which he is by no means entitled to adopt in my house."

I now began to think, from seeing Wells infinitely more excited than I had ever found him, that the quarrel between Fanny and her intended was a "mighty pretty quarrel as it stood," and that however far advanced the negotiations of the high contracting powers actually were, I might even yet have the satisfaction of seeing them frustrated. It must be admitted that the little *contre-temps* occurring at the moment was somewhat unseasonable, and yet I can scarcely tell why I did not so much dislike it, inasmuch as it presented "a diversion" (in the military sense of the word) from the "Siege of Troubles" by which we were assailed.

When I had enjoyed a *tête-à-tête* with Harriet, I found that Fanny's anger as regarded the Lieutenant was by no means ill-founded. He, without principle, either religious or moral, that anybody had ever yet discovered, chose to arraign Wells's conduct in describing—probably without any serious foundation—the circumstances of the examination. *He*, Merman, not knowing Lucian from Lucretius, and evidently seizing upon a point in conversation of no importance to *him*, at all events, to make a quarrel. Fanny told her sister that the mode in which the Lieutenant spoke of her father, and his conduct as what he called himself, “a Christian preacher and teacher,” was such that it was to her as incomprehensible as it was unbearable—that he had reproached her with her want of fortune; expressed in strong terms the condescension which he had evinced on his part, in returning to her after his disappointment; and in short, conducted himself with so much abruptness, to call it by no other term, that she had resolved to take her own course upon it without

communicating the details to her father, whose high spirit, notwithstanding the difference of their ages and professions, might lead him into some extremity with regard to his intended son-in-law, which would be most distressing under all circumstances, and probably disastrous under some.

The facts were these—what the motives to action on the part of Lieutenant Merman might be, remains to be explained—I admit that although I still dwelt upon the one sad and important theme in which our destinies were unquestionably involved, I was not ill-pleased that this little contention had arisen, inasmuch as it naturally occupied Harriet's mind, and held out to me the prospect of getting rid of a connexion with a man the most odious I had ever fallen in with, and the least likely, as I sincerely believed, to make my kind-hearted sister-in-law a happy woman.

Two days rolled on—the Lieutenant did not return—neither did Fanny receive any letter from him; and so far all *that* part of our family

was involved in mystery and surmise; not so we; the morning of the third day from poor Tom's death brought us a letter from Sniggs, who wrote word that he had arrived safely at Montpelier—that he had communicated the sad story to my poor brother Cuthbert, who was so much overcome as to be utterly unable to decide what he should wish to have done. Sniggs added, in a postscript, that he had expressed himself perfectly satisfied with his care and attention, and that of Mrs. Sniggs, towards the innocent sufferer; but regretted that when I knew the dear child was on the point of death, I had not gone to catch the last wishes of his life from his dying lips, and that Mrs. Brandyball had said, sobbingly, “It was most extraordinary how anybody so nearly connected with the dear boy could have abstained from visiting him in his illness.”

“Monstrous!” I exclaimed to myself. “The woman knew that one visit might have been as fatal as his constant occupation of his room at Ashmead—that the existence of my first, my

only infant, depended upon care and caution : and what she did not know, perhaps, was, that up to the moment when I abruptly heard of his death, I was led on by the flattering representation of Sniggs to look for his recovery. These are the things that sting one to the heart—misrepresentations, which one has no means of correcting—falsehoods, which one has no opportunity of controverting. Sniggs said the way in which Mrs. Brandyball was affected was something quite maternal, and added, “ If you could only see, my dear Sir, the devoted attention of this excellent lady to your dear brother, you would feel inclined to worship her.”

This from Sniggs !—“ Et tu, Brute !”—and after what he had hinted—not to *me*, but to Wells. This was indeed

“ ————— the most unkindest cut of all !”

But it was perhaps natural—he was playing *his* game with Cuthbert—expatiating on his carefulness, and watchfulness, and constant superintendance. If Mrs. Brandyball had occupied poor

Tom's room at Sniggs's two nights before he went into it, and the cupboard had been open, my opinion is, that Tom would have been alive now—for certain is it, that the searching eye and sensitive nose of the convivial dame, would have discovered the potion which killed *him*, but would only have comforted *her*.

Sniggs informed me that I was to hear again to-morrow, so that *he* had made good his footing at Montpelier; and then he tells me of the wonderful improvement in Kate's appearance even in that short time; that Mrs. Brandyball thought Ashmead unwholesome; that Jane was looking more rosy; and that, although dreadfully upset by the melancholy intelligence he had received, Cuthbert himself was marvellously better, as far as health went.

When I read the letter to Harriet she perfectly coincided with me—Sniggs was now joined in the conspiracy against us, and the influence of the Gorgon had been successfully exerted to link *him* to the faction by which we were to be sacrificed. Still we were left in suspense: not one

line from Cuthbert to me—not a syllable in the way of invitation thither—not a mention of when or where the funeral was to be performed; all things seemed to be at a stand-still, waiting, I supposed, until my unfortunate brother could be shaken out of his reverie to come to a resolution.

I confess Sniggs's letter was something more than I expected—it was a new grievance, a new affront. I had sent him in my own carriage, a messenger from myself, and to receive his answer and not a word from the nearest relation I had in the world—no, not even Mrs. Brandyball had condescended to put pen to paper. I felt myself now really fallen, and I am not ashamed to own that I sobbed with grief at the loss of a brother to whom I, and those who belonged to me, had devoted every effort and energy to make him happy and comfortable, and who *was* happy and comfortable before this fiend in scarcely human shape had inveigled him away from us.

There was something in Sniggs's letter which

sounded reproachful, evidently dictated, or rather occasioned by other people ; and, when I began to calculate and consider all the circumstances, I could not help beginning to fancy that there really was something in my conduct which might be construed into a want of feeling, not only by Cuthbert, but even by the neighbours. The poor boy *had* died in a strange house ; he *had* been removed from the comforts of Ashmead—comforts how secured ?—to the apothecary's residence, without a relation near him, and there he had died, and there his body lay : but, then, the infection—true, but then the man who had been constantly in attendance upon *him*, came to *me*. How can I describe the ten thousand feelings by which I was assailed ! And yet I do declare that the loss of the mere favour of Cuthbert in a worldly sense, perilous and destructive as it might be, was but a mole-hill in comparison with the mountain-like load of grief I experienced at the deprivation of his affection.

Well, the next day came ; no letter by the post. Mrs. Sniggs sent up her compliments to

beg to know whether we had heard from Mr. S.—Answer, not a word.—This was very strange; the funeral ought to take place as speedily as convenient; she wondered she had not got a letter, and so on. To me the silence was still more curious. However, as reason comes to one's aid even under the most trying circumstances, it at last struck me, and in that opinion Harriet agreed, that Sniggs would himself return in the course of the day, and so supersede the necessity of writing. We were not wrong; but we were not entirely right: we guessed the truth to a certain extent, but not the whole truth. At about six o'clock, just as I was sitting down in my wife's room to enjoy a *tête-à-tête* whiting and boiled chicken, a violent ringing at the gate announced an arrival; dogs barked as usual, servants scuffled, and, leaning over the balustrade, I heard Sniggs's voice directing his pale-faced flunkey to take care of his bag and box and carry them home. I heard other voices, I thought, and a rustling of petticoats crossing the hall to the dinner-room, which was dark and unoccupied,

for I was settled in for a snug consolatory evening up-stairs. The rustling noise came forth again, and I heard my man say, "My master is up-stairs, Miss." I held my breath and listened; it was all true. Sniggs waited in the hall, as a gentleman not of the family ought to do, but in less than two minutes I felt myself embraced and my cheeks wetted with the tears of Miss Kitty Falwasser and her sister Jane.

"This," said I, gently repelling Kate's excessive warmth of manner, "*is a surprise.*"

"Yes," said Kate, sobbing so that you might have heard her to the wine-cellar door; "we could—not—let—poor dear Tom go to the grave without—some one—who loved him being with—him; and dear Pappy is not well enough to come—and dear governess could not leave him—so—so—so we have come to go to his funeral."

Jane, less violent in her grief, but more sincere, pressed my hand and wept silently. I saw

she felt for the loss of her brother, uncouth as he was and harsh to her; for Jane was as different a creature from Kate as a discriminating observer of nature could well discover.

"I am glad to see you, dears," said I; and I felt glad that the gallery round the hall was not well lighted, lest my looks should not have entirely corresponded with my words. "I will go and tell Harriet you are here; your sudden appearance in her room might flurry her."

"How is she, dear thing?" said Kate.

"Oh, quite well," said I; "and how is my brother in health?"

"What, Pappy?" said Kate, who seemed scarcely to comprehend what I meant by the fraternal appellation. "He is pretty well in health, dear; but so shocked at the news, that we thought he would have died; I think he would if Mr. Sniggs hadn't been there."

"He thought you would have come to him,"

said Jane; “and your not coming, I think, vexed him a good deal.”

That’s pleasant, thought I. However, it was necessary, now, that the thing had taken its present turn, that Harriet should be apprized of the state of affairs, and I accordingly announced the arrival.

“I cannot look at Kate with patience,” said Harriet. “I know why *she* has come. What a silly, silly man your poor dear brother is !”

“Never mind,” said I ; “we have no course but one to pursue, so make up your mind to be civil.”

“Dear Gilbert,” said Harriet, giving me one of her kindest looks, “whatever you wish me to do, I will do if I can ; but the struggle is a difficult one, and not the less so from being so totally unexpected.”

In five minutes the young ladies were kissing Harriet on the dexter and sinister sides of her face, weeping as they thought became them,

and in half an hour more a refection was prepared in the dining-room, at which, dragged away from my sanctum up-stairs, I presided, and Sniggs and the two mourning nymphs assisted.

What happened next day I reserve for the next portion of my notes.

CHAPTER V.

WITH all her inherent excellences, there is no question but that a woman—a pure, virtuous, right-minded woman, does feel a stronger and more implacable hatred for vice and levity of character in another woman, than with a knowledge of her constitutional kindness of feeling, one would at first imagine possible. Now, as to Kate Falwasser, I saw, of course, and felt, the impropriety of her conduct with regard to Kittington; but it struck me to be only part and parcel of the system upon which she was ordinarily permitted to conduct herself, and a natural result of the course of education in which, under the able surveillance of Mrs.

Brandyball, and latterly by the negative attentions of Cuthbert, she had been trained. But Harriet's feelings were of a so much stronger character; her indignation—I believe I may call it disgust—so much more powerful than anything I could bring myself to feel, that she was unable to endure the presence of the girl, or, if she permitted her to stay in her room for half an hour, her look rested upon her handsome flushed cheek and her bright sparkling eyes with an expression which conveyed to me the idea that she positively loathed her.

“My dear Gilbert,” said Harriet, “it is quite impossible that you should permit this girl to stay here, and return to your brother without letting her understand that you are aware of her conduct with regard to Mr. Kittington. You owe it to Cuthbert, to *her*, and to yourself, to make her acquainted with the circumstance: why are you to be a silent party to such an odious transaction?”

“I do not see why I should meddle in it,” said I. “If Kittington were a different sort

of man from what he is, and there were any danger of matters coming to a serious conclusion, I should certainly consider it a duty to interfere; but as nothing of the kind is to be apprehended, I really do not see why I am to excite the ill-feeling of the girl, especially as I have already assured myself that she would by some means or other contrive to associate Cuthbert in her cause against me, and I should fall a victim to my attempt at any such exposure."

It was in vain I argued thus. Harriet talked of the principle of the affair—the propriety of using my knowledge of what was past, as a caution to the girl as to the future. Mrs. Wells had positively forbidden any intercourse between Kitty and Bessy Wells, who had been removed to a distance the morning after the arrival of the unwelcome visitor, under the plea of an old engagement, and the advantage of a change of air; and Fanny kept the house, not only out of respect to Tom's memory, but because the state of her engagement with the odious Lieutenant was growing particularly feverish.

Politics, I admit, occupied but a very small share of my attention just now, and, although always as a Tory born and bred, I delighted to hear of the successes almost weekly gained over our enemies by Lord Wellington, I felt so assured of the eventual triumph of my country over faction at home and foes abroad, that having no personal share, either civil or military, however humble it might have been, in the gigantic struggle going on, the fluctuations of my feelings were narrowed into the smallest possible circumference, and confined to the constantly vacillating question of whether and when Lieutenant Merman's recruiting service would really terminate, and his presence with his regiment be required. I heard faint rumours of an expectation that such an event was again anticipated, but I began to think that the subject was only agitated whenever any difference chanced to arise between the lovers. From what I could collect, it appeared that Fanny's eyes had been opened to the real

character of her admirer, and that her filial affection seemed to preponderate in the scale during the discussion which was taking place as to the late outbreak of the gallant gentleman's temper.

Thus left to ourselves, Harriet was compelled to endure more of the society of the young ladies from Bath than would otherwise have been necessary, and, while I was present, I confess I sat upon thorns, expecting every moment an explosion of Harriet's indignation, which I so earnestly desired to avoid.

"Pappy," said Kate, "wished us very much to see poor dear brother Tom before he was buried, but Uncle seems to think it would be dangerous for us."

"So do I," said Harriet; "and if anything were to happen——"

"But then," said Kate, with an extra degree of animation, "I have been vaccinated on purpose, you know, dear. I should like it."

"I shouldn't," said Jane; "I should like to remember my poor dear brother as he *was* when

alive ; then we may fancy him absent and away, and yet to return to us—but if we see him dead, the recollection of him so will always last."

"I think," said I, "you are right, Jane."

"But then I could go without Jane," said Kate ; "Foxcroft could go with me, and——"

"No," said I, "it would be the height of imprudence."

"I could go alone, if that's all," said Kate ; "I am not the least afraid, and I know the way."

"It would not, I think, be considered delicate," said Harriet, "for you to be seen in the streets of Blissfold."

"What," said the young lady, "not if I were going to see my poor brother !"

"I think you had better not," said I.

This evidently checked, but did not stop her, in the course which she was pursuing.

"Well," continued she, "after the funeral, we may go and see Fanny Wells, although Bessy *is* gone ?"

"Certainly," said Harriet; "only I under-

stood you were to return immediately after the funeral was over."

"Why, so Pappy said," answered Kate ; "but—I—"

Here she was again foiled in what, with Harriet's predisposition to suspect, she considered the main object of her visit to Ashmead.

"Who are to go to the funeral, dear ?" said Kate, addressing Harriet.

"Why," said I, "you tell me that it is Cuthbert's desire that both of you should attend ; it is most unusual, and I should say unexpected, and—"

"Well, but, Uncle," said Jane, quietly, and certainly with much reason, "if we are not to go to see him before he is buried, nor go to the burying itself, we might as well have stayed at home."

"Not at all, Jane," said Kitty, sharply. "It shows our affection and regard to Tom even to be here at this time. I suppose you will go, Uncle?"

"I propose doing so, certainly," said I.

"And Mr. Sniggs will go," said Kate.

"And Mr. Wells," said I, "will perform the service."

"Is there anybody else one could ask?" said Kate, affecting to consider the subject. "Is there nobody we know—that—"

"Nobody that *you* know, Miss Falwasser," said Harriet, flushing crimson, "except your dancing-master—perhaps you would like *him* to be one of the mourners."

"What an idea!" said Jane.

"Well," said Kitty, in a tone which left us in doubt whether she felt or did not feel the latent meaning of my uncontrollably indignant wife's observation, "I see nothing so absurd in *that*. I'm sure he was as fond of Tom as anybody in this house ever was."

I gave Harriet a family look—a preventive glance—something between the entreating and monitory; she returned a significant toss of her head, and, to my infinite delight, said nothing.

"I am certain," said Kate, "that Mr. Kittington took more pains with brother Tom," and here she cried, "than anybody I ever saw take pains with anybody—poor dear boy, he had not a turn for dancing; but still, I do think, if we may not go out, at least—I'm sure Pappy would like it—I do think Mr. Kittington might follow his dear remains to the grave."

Here Kitty sobbed more vehemently, and here my dear Harriet seemed quite ready—if I may use the expression—to boil over with indignation. Kate's real object, cloaked in the affectation of sorrow, roused all her anger, and I hastened to interpose an observation that, however attentive Mr. Kittington might have been professionally to her brother, and however respectable in himself, he was not included in our circle of friends, whence alone attendants on such occasions were selected.

"Why, doctors go," said Kate; "and they are not friends, only attendants."

"True," said I; "but there is a slight

difference between the services of the doctor and the dancing-master, as regards the deceased, towards the termination of his existence."

"Well, Uncle," said Kate, pertinaciously adhering to her favourite proposition, "of course I have nothing to do with it. I dare say Mrs. Brandyball will write to me to-day, and I shall hear to-morrow; for perhaps she may have some new directions to give about it."

Another glance of my wife's eye followed the announcement of this supposition, which renewed my trepidation lest she should be unable further to conceal her real feelings—for an attempt at hypocrisy with Harriet was really an effort: nor was I much displeased at seeing her make preparations for quitting the room which we had invaded. Thus encouraged, I suggested to the girls that the baby required his mother's care, and that we had better retire.

Whether I should have suspected what was passing in Kate's extremely shallow mind, if I had not been previously made aware of the circumstances which had occurred with regard to

Kittington, I do not presume to guess; but having been so pre-advised, every word, every look, every action of the girl seemed to me connected with the furtherance of the affair, and an anxiety to understand why her tender epistle yet remained unanswered. There was a restlessness about her—a constant going to the windows at the back of the house, which were not closed, and looking out upon the lawn and grounds as if hoping to see the object of her unquestionable affection, who, by no possible chance, could be there; then taking up a book and flirting over the leaves, stopping, perhaps, at a point the subject of which might in any degree be assimilated to what she considered her own circumstances; and then came a fit of absence, during which it appeared to me she was calculating upon the safest and surest means of obtaining an interview with her graceful preceptor.

I was half-inclined, during one of her paroxysms of abstraction, to dissipate the vision at once, and tell her all I knew of the matter. My old pro-

pensity for procrastination, however, triumphed, and I resolved to wait a day or two and see what would turn up.

My cogitations on this subject were interrupted by the arrival of Wells, who, under naturally excited feelings, came to open his heart to me and even seek advice about Fanny, which, knowing so much of his pro-matrimonial disposition as I did, I felt it would be difficult to give. The fact appeared to be that the Lieutenant—totally opposed in politics, and, as he had recently discovered, in principle to the Rector, and disappointed in his expectations as to the fortune Fanny was likely to bring him—had gradually retreated in proportion to Wells's advance; and had even used the gaiety and conviviality which Wells had pressed into the service to make his house agreeable to him, as weapons against his moral and clerical character. After the disappointment of his hopes with regard to Miss Maloney's acceptance of him, his return to Blissfold appeared to have been the result of mingled vanity and revenge

—he could prove to the thoughtless Millicent how much he was beloved by *her* whom he had sacrificed for her sake.

I had long before formed an opinion of all the parties brought before me in this discussion, which circumstances did not at all tend to change. Wells had so often avowed the doctrine of his addiction to early marriages, when I myself was an illustration, that I could easily imagine Merman to have only gone half the length of pressing a match upon Fanny. Of Fanny I knew enough to know that her affection for Merman might be considered negative, inasmuch as he was the only available dangler in the place; and that, moreover, having been, as was rumoured, a pretender to Harriet's hand, there would be something like a rural and domestic triumph in securing him, while with regard to Merman himself—hating him cordially, as I have already admitted—it seemed to me that he treated the poor girl as a mere child, whom he could twist round his finger and whistle off or whistle on as he pleased.

I therefore took leave to inquire of my reverend father-in-law what he thought of the state of the attachment of the parties to each other, and found by his replies, as I anticipated, that Fanny, although naturally leaning husband-wise, was, even in the present stage of the affair, perfectly willing to leave the case in her father's hands: in short, that she was ready to marry the Lieutenant, and subsequently become his dutiful and affectionate wife; or, if it were required of her, equally willing to let him join his regiment, or do anything else which might eternally divide them. In fact, I believe the whole history, as far as Fanny was concerned, had its origin in the desire not to be left far behind Harriet in the matrimonial race.

The counsel I gave to the Rector—and it did seem strange that he should, so shortly after my marriage to his eldest daughter, come to *me* for an opinion upon the projected union of his second—was to wait for some further communication from the Radical recruiter. In fact, Merman had left the case at a stage in which it was im-

possible for my father-in-law farther to proceed, even if he knew where to address him. He agreed with me in this opinion, as indeed he could not fail to do; for the English soldier had taken what is called French leave; and although his servant remained at his lodgings in Blissfold, we knew not whither he was gone, and were none of us likely to apply for information upon that most interesting point.

The advice I gave was meritorious in two ways: I did not commit myself with either the lover or the parent; and, moreover, it was the only advice I could give. I acted, I admit, a little upon my old principle of waiting to see what would turn up; and as I knew something must turn up by the arrival of the next post, I felt proportionably interested in the general result, which eleven o'clock would infallibly produce; although I also admit that I certainly was not prepared for the accumulation of events which were, in point of fact, destined to overwhelm me long before that hour.

Kate, who, I confess, was an object of con-

siderable interest to me—not perhaps of the interest which the generality of the world might call “interesting,” but because the having her in my house involved, as I felt, a similar sort of responsibility to that which a man incurs who chances to have deposited in his care a barrel of gunpowder, which an unlucky match might, at some unexpected moment, explode. She was constantly hovering about the hall or the garden in a lamentable state of worry. Jane conducted herself differently: she did nothing to occupy her mind—poor dear, she had not much mind to occupy; and except, as I have before had occasion to remark, looking at prints in books or affecting to do some work equivalent to nothing, her occupations consisted chiefly in looking at the fire or playing with the spaniel’s ears—so far that was safe; for although in after-life the still and silent lady is the one for mischief—at the relative ages of Kate and Jane, Kate was the impracticable one.

I was not so innocent of the world’s ways as not to suspect that Kate’s restlessness was inti-

mately connected with the real object of her affectionate visit to Ashmead. She seemed more anxious to communicate with her maid than seemed essentially necessary; and Harriet being still up-stairs, there was nobody to detect the little fidgetings and whisperings in the gallery, and even in the hall itself, which were going on, except myself. I however calmed my apprehension of anything unfortunate happening, by a recollection of the highly honourable conduct of Kittington; and even went the length of saying to myself, as, indeed, I had previously thought—" Well, if she did marry Kittington—bating her extreme juvenility—she might do worse; and as for Cuthbert, she would be sure of his forgiveness if she took it into her head to marry his man Rumagee Bomajee, with his high-caste yellow streak down his nose. I believe really—and I hope I do not do her an injustice—but I do really believe that Harriet, when she found me disposed to palliate Kate's conduct about her *Dieu de la danse*, felt a great inclination to withdraw all her horrors

and let her take her course. "Let her marry him," thought Harriet, "and then Cuthbert will see what a delightful creature his daughter-in-law is." The experiment would have failed; but Kittington was not so to be caught.

Well, Kate wandered, like Goosy Goosy Gander,

"Up stairs, down stairs, to my lady's chamber;"

whence, I believe, *my* lady would very readily have ordered Foxcroft to

"Take her by the left leg, and throw her down stairs,"

but that the restlessness of her love-sick mind rendered the expulsion unnecessary.

Wells went home—we dined—Sniggs did not appear—and I took his absence as a sort of barometrical symptom of his knowledge of the state of my influence at Montpelier, and I was obliged to be as agreeable as nature or the circumstances of the case permitted me to be to my two young friends.

Scarcely however had the dessert been put down, and Kitty eaten three mouthfuls of Cuthbert's best preserved ginger, when the sound of carriage-wheels, rapidly revolving, followed by the sudden jam crash of a stop at the hall-door, made us all start. Jingle, whingle, whingle, bang went the bells—bark went the dogs—a rush of servants across the hall followed, and the usual sequel of clapping down carriage-steps and mingled noises burst upon our ears.

“ What’s this?” said I.

“ Pappy,” said Kate.

“ Mrs. Brandyball,” said Jane.

“ The Deuce!” said I.

Open flew the dinner-room doors, and the servant announced “ Mr. and Mrs. Nubley.”

“ Gracious me!” said I, starting from my seat, and advancing to welcome my most unexpected visitors.

And sure enough in walked Mrs. Nubley, grinning and smirking, with her hand, as usual, over her mouth—Nubley following, having

scarcely finished his directions to his servant as to what the post-boy was to be paid for a fourteen-mile stage.

“Lauk! Mr. Gurney,” screamed the lady, “here you are—who these two young ladies are I don’t know. How is Mrs. Gurney?”

“As well as can be expected,” said I.

“Lauk! you are such a man!” replied the lady. “He! he! he!”

“My dear friend,” said Nubley, in the most lugubrious tone, “you don’t, I suppose, know the reason of our coming here yet?—*How should he?*” added the worthy, in his soliloquising tone.

“I guess,” said I, fully impressed with the belief that Cuthbert had begged Nubley to attend the remains of the lamented Tom to the grave.

“Can’t guess,” replied Nubley.

“Sit down, Mrs. Nubley,” said I; “what can I offer you?—have you dined?”

“Dined!” said the lady; “lauk! Mr. G., you *are* so droll! Dined! do you suppose my

dear N. could have gone on without something to eat before this? He! he! he!"

"It's a bad business that has brought me here," drawled out Nubley.

"Yes," said I, "a sad business; but I am glad you are come."

"What, have you heard?" said the little man with the large head.

"Of course," replied I. "Here are two young ladies whom you ought to know."

"They arn't two of the Thompsons?" said Nubley.

"Of the what?" said I.

"Oh!" said Nubley, "then you *don't* know. I'll take a little weak warm brandy and water," continued he; "and, my love," addressing his wife, "hadn't you better go and see Mrs. Gurney, and take off your things? We are come to stay a little with you."

"I conclude," said I, "that my brother Cuthbert has written to you, and that you will remain here, at all events, a day or two after the funeral."

“ Funeral !” said Nubley, with the deepest grief depicted on his little countenance.

“ Funeral !” screamed Mrs. Nubley. “ He ! he ! he ! What a droll man you are, Mr. G !”

“ Are you not aware, then,” said I, “ that poor Cuthbert’s favourite son-in-law is dead, else why is the house shut up?—These are his sisters.”

“ Lauk !” said Mrs. Nubley.

“ My !” said Mr. Nubley, “ that ugly baby ?”

And both the young ladies fell to sobbing incontinently.

“ So it is,” continued I; “ and I concluded, when I saw you, that Cuthbert had apprised you of the fact, and wished you to attend the ceremony.”

“ Not a bit of it,” said Nubley. “ Dear me ! —I am very sorry—nice boy, I suppose—poor little dears ! Why, Mrs. Nubley, you knew their mother. Dear me !—are these—eh !—la !—*how naked their shoulders are !*—eh !—what !—don’t you, my dear——”

“ Lauk ! Mr. Nubley, to be sure I did,” said Mrs. Nubley; “ and are you two really the

dear little things I remember in Calcutta ?
Bless me, how you are grown !”

“ They do grow,” said Nubley ; and then picking the stubble from his chin, muttered, “ *umph ! what a foolish remark !—eh ! I’m very sorry about the boy. What did he die of ?* ”

“ Small-pox,” said I.

“ Not in the house ?” said Nubley.

“ No,” said Kate, “ I wish he was, poor dear —for then we might take a last look at him.”

“ Poor dear !” said Nubley, “ where have you put him to ?”

“ Oh,” said I, “ I will explain all the circumstances by-and-by. Perhaps, Mrs. Nubley, you would like to see Harriet. Kate, dear, ring, and send for Foxcroft, and go with Mrs. Nubley to your aunt’s room—go, Jane, love.”

And by all these exertions I put the train in motion, and found myself left alone with my present absent friend, whose peculiarities I have already so particularly noted down in the first portion of my papers, as to render any further remark wholly unnecessary.

"What, then," said Nubley, when the *ladies* had retired, "brother Cuthbert isn't here?"

"No," said I, "he is gone to live for the present at Bath."

"Do these young Falwassers stay here?"

"No," said I, "they are here merely for the funeral of the brother."

"What, then," said Nubley, "Cuthbert has given up the house to you altogether?"

"I hope," said I, "he will soon return," rather embarrassed by the question.

Nubley, as was his custom, fixed his eyes full upon my face, and, as usual, stubbling his chin, muttered, "*Not he—never, as long as you live.* And these girls," continued he, avowedly addressing me, "are two of the little children I remember being sent home by poor Falwasser. Good man, Falwasser—not wise—henpecked—talked to death by his wife—though he *was* a lawyer—eh! And when do they bury the boy?"

"The day is not fixed," said I, "nor will be till to-morrow. You will attend the funeral?"

"Why, that depends," said Nubley—"not being asked—can't say."

"Oh," said I, "I am too proud to ask you."

"You!" said Nubley; "ah! that's all very well—but—however, we'll see—Cuthbert hasn't, you know—and so—but never mind—what I have come here about—never thought of a funeral!—Captain Thompson, or whatever his name is, who has taken Chittagong Lodge—with his nieces—and they all have cousins—I never heard of such a number of cousins; I am told they are playing old Nick with the place—and the dilapidations are great, and rent not certain, eh!—let furnished—can't distract my own chairs and tables;—and so—not knowing of all this—we came down to beg a night or two's houseroom — never thought of the death — *wouldn't have come if I had heard of it.*"

That there was room for their accommodation in the house at Ashmead could not be denied; but it did really seem the most vexatious addi-

tion to all my other calamities, that this most eccentric couple of people, in their separate ways, should be quartered upon me just at a moment when I was almost overwhelmed with difficulties of even greater importance.

I smiled a new welcome, which was scarcely ended when Mrs. Nubley and the young ladies returned to us, having been, as it was evident to me, ejected with very little ceremony, from what, by courtesy, was still called Harriet's "sick-room."

"Lauk! Mr. Gurney," screamed Mrs. Nubley, "what a beautiful babby!—quite a 'Ercles!—I never *did* see. He! he! he!—you are such a man! and dear Mrs. G., how well she is looking! I have asked all about the family—'specially after Fanny, and dear little Lizzy—Bessy, you call her."

"*I do,*" said Kate; "I'm very fond of Bessy, and so is she of *me*."

"Do you recollect much of your mother, my little dear?" said Nubley.

"Sir!" said Kate, colouring crimson all over

her neck and shoulders at being addressed in the paternal manner which Mr. Nuble chose to adopt.

“ You don’t recollect much of your poor mother ?”

“ No ! I should think not !” said Kate, tossing her head aside. “ It is more than ten years since I was in India.”

“ Dear me,” said Nuble, “ is that possible ? —eh ! Mrs. N., *ten* years ? Well, to be sure !—eh ! And you have been at school all this time, my little love ?”

“ I’ve left school now,” said Kate, looking stilettos at her examiner.

“ Only for a time, Kate,” said I.

“ For ever, I hope,” said Kate. “ The minute Mrs. Brandyball retires, I am never to be pestered with school any more. Why should I ?”

“ And what is *your* name, my pretty child ?” continued Nuble, addressing the other Fal-wasser.

“ Jane, Sir,” said she.

"Lauk!" said Mrs. Nubley, "you were called after your aunt—I remember now. And are you both very clever?—I suppose so. Your mamma was a charming woman—great friend of mine—many a pleasant day we have passed together. But it's no use talking of *that* now. He! he! he!"

To this sort of conversation—if conversation it might be called—I was destined to listen till tea and coffee were produced; during the exhibition of which (Kate doing the honours) Mrs. Nubley detailed all their apprehensions as to the mischief that was going on at Chittagong, and their anxiety to know its extent, and the means of obtaining legal redress;—the by-play of the scene being kept up most assiduously by the young ladies of the party, who, whenever an opportunity occurred, indulged themselves in making the most grotesque faces at each other, in the highest degree expressive of disgust and contempt, which the proceedings of the newly-arrived guests had excited in their youthful bosoms. Seeing all this in progress, I felt it

imperative on me not to hand over the antiques to the good-breeding of the moderns, by leaving the room, which I was most anxious to do, in order to communicate with Harriet upon the arrangements necessary in consequence of the arrival of our unexpected guests.

It required a good deal of manœuvring to manage this matter, and I at last resolved to detach Mrs. Nubley, or rather carry her off with me to Harriet's room, to get her out of harm's way—not so much caring about Nubley, who, in his quaint, odd manner, might make a tolerable fight against the pertness of my young connexions; but there I was defeated, for the moment I suggested the lady's visit to my wife's room, both the dear girls volunteered to accompany us, and persisted in their intention, in spite of my remonstrances against their leaving Mr. Nubley by himself.

It is not worth while putting down in detail the various little schemes and stratagems by which the evening, in a house where mirth and amusement were interdicted, was consumed; but it is

important to observe that a conversation which I had with Nubley, after the ladies had retired for the night, gave a new turn to my thoughts, and even to my hopes with regard to Cuthbert. Of the manners, style, and tone of behaviour adopted by the young Falwassers, the old Indian, even in the short space of time which had passed since his arrival at Ashmead, had formed a tolerably decided opinion, and spoke of them in terms not less strong and abrupt than those which he was ordinarily in the habit of using upon less delicate topics. I saw he was vexed and mortified, and from a few of those involuntary mutterings in which he developed his secret thoughts, as well as from his avowed observations on the subject, vexed and mortified not more on his own account, or that of his wife, than upon mine—seeing that he had gathered, even in four hours, sufficient knowledge of the real state of the case, as to be convinced that there was an influence at work over Cuthbert which was superior to mine, even if it had not already superseded it entirely.

The moment his remarks took the character of

suspicion of this melancholy truth, and that I found him lamenting that so strange a perversion of all that might have been expected was likely to take place, it occurred to me that if I found my worst apprehensions realised, and that the system of neglect and even insult—I say insult, as far as Harriet is concerned—was continued, my only chance of retrieving Cuthbert, of opening his eyes to the delusion which Mrs. Brandyball was practising, and of re-establishing my natural claims to his affection, would be by the intercession of his present friend and former partner in business, Nubley. It is the advantage of a sanguine disposition to seize upon a new idea with a sort of ecstacy, and to be full of gratitude for the apparent chance which has given it birth, and then to call to mind the combination of circumstances in which it has originated, in order to prove that it must be fortunate. If Nubley's tenants at Chittagong had been respectable people, he would not have come to Ashmead, which at first I considered an annoyance. If he had not come to Ashmead

during this particular week, he would not have seen the two young ladies, who involuntarily and unconsciously betrayed to him the real state of the case; it was not luck—it was not good fortune—but Providence that had permitted this very unexpected meeting; and so earnestly did I feel the importance of the coincidence, that before Harriet's eyes were closed for the night, she was apprised of my hopes and my determination.

It was well I *had* conjured up such hopes—for even if they eventually proved groundless, they served to sustain me against a new attack. Morning came—breakfast came—post-hour came—no letter for *me*, except a bill from Messrs. Rumble and Stump, coachmakers of Long Acre, inclosing their bill of 42*l.* 16*s.* 6*d.*, for the chariot with which I certainly understood Cuthbert had presented me, and for repairs done to the phaeton, which I imagined he had in the kindest manner possible given Harriet. This, unexpected as it was, appeared by no means so extraordinary as the absence of any communica-

tion from Cuthbert or his familiar—not a line to me: this might be nothing—but not a line to Kitty—that *was* something, and I could not satisfy myself of the reality of the circumstance, without renewing my inquiries as to the receipt of the letter-bag, and whether it had been opened, before it was brought to me, as was sometimes the case, when the young ladies were what they then called “at home;” but no—the key had not been removed from the place where I always kept it, and the servants were perfectly sure nobody had touched the bag.

When once suspicion is excited, however gently, confidence ends; and I confess it was rather by the evident mystification of the girls themselves at breakfast, at not having heard from Cuthbert, or the busy B., that I was satisfied that no tricks had been played with the letters, than by any other part of the history.

It was not long, however, before I was enlightened. I had observed, since Sniggs’s return from Montpelier, a sort of shyness—a

disinclination to be so much about Ashmead; indeed, I minuted it down at the time, and drew my conclusions therefrom. Every hour of his absence, and his unwillingness to come to a house out of which it was previously difficult to keep him, satisfied me that my first suspicions were well grounded, and that he felt his ultimate success in his attacks upon Cuthbert's pocket very much depended on an ostensible abandonment of me and mine; nor did I doubt that his latent dislike for Mrs. Wells—for a share of which I of course came in, because at her suggestion, or rather command, I had invited Dr. Downey (whom he hated, because he envied) to supplant him when Harriet was confined—gave a very considerable additional weight to my poor brother's injunctions to him, which, as I felt it, delivered over to him the entire charge and arrangement of every proceeding consequent upon Tom's death.

The arrival shortly after breakfast, not of Sniggs, but of the putty-faced urchin in the glazed hat, with a letter directed not to me, but

to Kitty, entirely justified my suspicions. The pacquet was delivered to the young lady, with an announcement that Mr. Sniggs's servant waited.

Kitty upon receiving the letter begged to retire, and suiting the action to the word, quitted the breakfast-room, followed by Jane. The interesting young creatures remained absent about half an hour, when Jane returned, bringing me the following letter, addressed by Sniggs—by Sniggs, recollect—to Kate :—

“ My dear Miss Falwasser—I have received the inclosed for you from Mrs. Brandyball, who tells me she writes in the name of dear Mr. Cuthbert — who is too much exhausted to write to you himself. I send you also a letter which I have received, and which you will be good enough to show to Mr. Gilbert Gurney. Make my compliments to him, and say, that, knowing his dread of infection, I consider it, under existing circumstances, more prudent to abstain from visiting Ashmead for the present. I shall be glad to hear from

you and your sister as to your wishes with regard to the contents of Mrs. Brandyball's letter, of which, as you will see by the letter, which you will be good enough to show your uncle, I am in some degree aware. Pray present my best respects to Mr. Gilbert Gurney and his lady, and believe me, dear Miss Falwasser,

“ Your obedient servant,

“ S. SNIGGS.”

“ Well,” said I, “ and where is this letter which I am to be favoured with a sight of?”

“ Here, dear,” said Jane.

“ *Montpelier, Feb. —, ——.*

“ Dear Mr. Sniggs—The devoted attentions which you were kind enough to bestow upon the dear departed have so entirely gained—I will not only say, the esteem—but the affection of Mr. Gurney, that he would again and again have expressed his gratitude in writing had he the power to exert himself sufficiently: as it is, I am deputed to perform the pleasing office of

conveying to you his renewed expressions of esteem.

“ Mr. Gilbert Gurney’s peculiar situation with regard to his newborn child, and the dread which his wife entertains of infection, induce Mr. Gurney to address himself direct to you as to the necessary instructions for the interment of the dear boy, instead of creating any alarm in their family. He wishes the funeral to be in the highest degree respectable, but free from ostentatious display, and leaves it entirely to you to decide whether the dear children should attend it; the main point being, the question whether any danger to themselves is likely to impend. This will however all rest with you, to whom he entirely confides the whole arrangement.

“ I have written at length to Miss Falwasser, but as you are considered responsible by Mr. Gurney for the conduct of this business, and as he is so very strongly impressed with your kindness and activity in hastening hither from

all your professional avocations to break the melancholy news of the demise of the poor child, who, (unavoidably I admit,) was an exile from the house in which, of all others in the world, he ought to have been a permanent inmate, he relies wholly upon you to see that his injunctions are strictly complied with.

“ I should feel greatly obliged to you if you would persuade Mrs. Sniggs to do any little kind office to the dear girls with respect to whatever article of mourning which they may require. Mrs. Gilbert Gurney is not yet, of course, sufficiently recovered to take much trouble upon such points, and although I believe the young ladies are provided with all the essentials for a change of habit, still if you would mention this request of Mr. Gurney’s, he would feel obliged to you, for they are yet young, and although they have suffered a double privation in the loss of both parents, their losses occurred at a period of their lives when their minds had not imbibed sufficient knowledge of

mundane affairs to be capable recipients of information essential upon such melancholy occasions.

“ I have another word to say : Mr. Gurney, whose soul breathes the spirit of gentleness, and whose heart is all affection, has devoted the last few hours to the composition of a few lines by way of inscription on the tablet of which you so feelingly spoke when you were here—and what a consolation was your visit in the absence of nearer ties ! Mr. Gurney incloses the inscription due to the merits of the poor lost angel, which I consider beyond all praise. If Mr. Gilbert Gurney could spare time to look at this tribute, I think his brother would be gratified, for he sometimes speaks of him with kindly feeling, which I hope he will always cherish. The artist you mentioned when you were here, would, I have no doubt, adequately execute any little memorial suitable to the circumstances. I refer you to Miss Falwasser for any further particulars, to whom I

have communicated all that can be necessary to guide your conduct. With the best regards of Mr. Gurney, in which I sincerely join,

“ Believe me, dear Mr. Sniggs, yours truly,
“ I. BRANDYBALL.”

I could hardly contain, not so much my indignation, as my astonishment at the contents of this most extraordinary letter, and it was with great difficulty I attempted to read the enclosure, containing the proposed inscription to the memory of poor Tom. Read it I did, and I admit it only added one more to the many examples of caricatured description which abound in all the cathedrals, churches, chapels, convents, conventicles, crypts, and cemeteries in the world. Thus it ran, and although Cuthbert was permitted to assume the credit of the composition, the beautifully figurative style of Mrs. Brandyball would, spite of all her efforts to subdue it, burst out in its most unquestionable form :—

" Sacred to the memory of
Master THOMAS GEORGE FALWASSER.

Who died on the — of ——, 18 —,
Aged fourteen years and six weeks.

To a lovely person and captivating manners

He united a capacious mind,

Admirably well stored, considering the
Tenderness of his years, with knowledge
And accomplishments.

His disposition was amiable and kind,

His feelings were just and honourable,

His thoughts pure and guileless,

His affections devoted and undivided

For those

Who, bending under the weight of his

Irreparable loss,

Have, to testify their never-fading love

And remembrance of him,

Placed this humble but genuine testimony

To his worth and virtues,

Which seemed to be of a character too celestial

For this grovelling sphere.

This inscription was more than I could digest; and yet, as I have already said, the system is a common one, and the flattering falsehoods which grace the marble shrines of those whose merits while alive were not discernible, at least to the naked eye, are little worse than this tribute to Tom Falwasser. At his age, poor fellow, I could not

say, as the officer did who paraphrased Purell's, epitaph in Westminster Abbey, in favour of a general whose remains lay undistinguished by a line of remark, "He is gone to that place where his own fireworks alone can be exceeded;" but I could not read of his amiable disposition, lovely person, and captivating manners, without thinking of the squibs and crackers, or reverting to the last two bottles of cherry brandy.

I saw at once that the effusion was the result of the first shock, and that a few weeks would so far assuage the grief of Cuthbert for his loss, as to permit me, if it were left to my discretion, to moderate, in some degree, the extraordinary eulogy which it contained. It is wonderful how often this sort of softening down occurs in the world.

Some years since one of our most eminent sculptors was applied to, by a Mrs. Gingham, the widow of a fashionable tradesman, who had died exceedingly rich, to make a design for a monument to his mèmory. The lady, who was, as the poet has it, cursed with a taste, gave a description of the sort of monu-

ment she wished for, which was to consist of a group of figures :—Fame was to appear, sounding the reputation of the late Mr. Gingham, as an eminent linen-draper ; Hibernia, with a piece of Irish cloth under her arm, was to lean on her stringless harp ; while Britannia was to be represented embracing Mr. G., as he was seated in his armed chair, with an opened remnant of cambric muslin in his lap, while Liberty, standing behind him, displayed her *bonnet-rouge* on a pole immediately over his head. Above these again were to be two or three plump little boys, naked, with wings, flying about as wild as swallows ; and in the fore-ground were to be disposed several bales of goods, an anchor, a pile of cannon-balls, the rudder of a ship, and other suitable objects calculated to convey a just idea of the extent of his business ; while at his feet were to be seen kneeling his mourning widow and three children. On the right hand the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral was to be just visible, with palm-trees, pyramids, crocodiles, and cypresses in the distance. Startled by the

elaborate description furnished by the exemplary lady, the sculptor hinted that the execution of such a work would cost at least seven or eight thousand pounds.

"A mere trifle to one who loved as *I* have loved," said Mrs. G. "Make the design."

The sculptor *did* make the design, and at the end of three months the lady called again:—she saw the beautiful sketch; and then said, she thought perhaps any memorial on so extensive a scale might appear somewhat ostentatious—that everybody knew how extensive her poor dear G.'s trade had been, and that perhaps under all the circumstances the single figure sitting alone would be better. The fore-ground might be embellished and relieved with certain emblems, &c.; but upon consideration she wished the sculptor would reduce the design to the cost of about two thousand pounds.

The artist again did as she desired, and her late husband was represented G. by himself, G. in the same armed chair as before—Hibernia had left her stringless harp and piece of Irish linen in

one corner—Britannia had posed her shield in the other—Fame had deposited her trumpet on one side of his seat, and Liberty had placed the pole, with her cap upon it, behind it—in fact, the emblems remained, but the figures had taken their departure.

Three months more elapsed, and the widow came again. Again she admired the design—But still thought it rather too extensive or perhaps expensive.

“Sir,” said she to Sir Phidias, “would it not be better to adopt a little sketch which my particular friend Mr. Hobkirk has kindly made—merely a tablet—and an inscription—quite plain and simple?”

Hereabouts, Sir Phidias lost all patience; and doing a violence to his naturally kind feelings, entreated the lady to transfer her favours to the first stone-mason she might meet with, who would no doubt be too happy to receive fifty pounds for embodying her young friend’s ideas.

It may, perhaps, be superfluous to add that

Mrs. Gingham became Mrs. Hobkirk long before the tablet was begun, and that the lamented linen-draper measures his length in the parish church to this day, unhonoured and unrecorded.

As human nature is human nature, I calculated that poor Cuthbert's seven thousand pounds' worth of sorrow, at the present moment, would gradually decrease to a reasonable amount, and accordingly put the beautiful inscription into my coat-pocket to "bide its time;" not, I admit, in the slightest degree disposed just at that period to offer a word of opinion as to its literary merits.

"Well," said I to Jane, after having read this curious communication, addressed to a person who had so unexpectedly been "made up" into an intimate friend, "and what does Kate's letter say?"

"Oh," said Jane, "she won't tell *me*: all she says is, that she wishes to see Mr. Sniggs directly; and wishes to know whether you think she might not go to his house in the pony-

phaeton—with the head up—with me, and take our maid with us, and then we might see poor Tom; and besides, she wants to buy some crape and some love——”

“ Some what?” said I.

“ Some mourning-stuff,” said Jane; “and as aunt is not well enough to trouble herself, Kitty thinks we might go.”

“ *I* think not,” said I—“ nothing could be more indelicate.”

“ Very well, Uncle,” said Jane, who is really well-dispositioned, and whom I knew, had only been put forward by her elder sister; “then I’ll go and tell Kate so. Only she has got a great deal about it all in *her* letter.”

Away went Jane. Nubley had heard what passed. He turned his eyes upwards and moaned, and looked out of the window, and played the Devil’s tatoo upon the glass. I liked the symptoms. I had not breathed a syllable of my intention of making him a mediator between Cuthbert and myself; therefore every aggravating circumstance that could occur illustrative of

the inevitable division between us while he was with me was delightful to *me*. Mrs. Nubley had gone to Harriet, who was yet ignorant of the “cut direct” which Cuthbert had given us by delivering the *carte blanche* for the arrangements into the hands of the Gorgon who commanded him.

Accredited as Kate evidently was, I honestly admit I waited her approach with trepidation. It really *was* too bad: every act of my life since Cuthbert’s return and domiciliation amongst us had been invariably misrepresented; and the last measure which I had adopted, not only upon my own feeling, but with the entire support of a man of the world like Wells,—I mean *that* of sending Sniggs to Montpelier instead of going myself, had produced the least looked-for effect: for it had not only increased his popularity with Cuthbert, but had estranged him from myself, and made me contemptible in the eyes of the man whom I had raised into notice, and even practice, by inviting him to attend Cuthbert at Ashmead.

I waited for Kate—she did not come. Nubley seemed extremely fidgetty—so was I; and, in the midst of this most embarrassing lull, as the sailors call it, a loud ringing at the hall-door announced an arrival; and who should present himself, but the reverend Rector, my worthy father-in-law, whose flushed cheeks and almost quivering lip proclaimed him in a sort of agony of excitement—the cause of which I was not very far from anticipating.

He entered the room, and hastily acknowledging Nubley, as if he had expected to find him there—which he certainly could not have done—caught my hand.

“ Give me ten minutes’ conversation,” said Wells; “ you never heard—I have got a letter—insolent puppy——”

“ Come into the library,” said I—“ to be sure—yes—I can guess.”

“ You never heard,” said Wells.

“ It doesn’t surprise me,” replied I.

“ I want to read you part of Mrs. Brandyball’s letter,” said Kate, coming into the room

at the same moment.—“ Ah, Mr. Wells, how do you do?”

“ Very ill, my dear,” said Wells.

“ Very well,” said I, “ I’ll hear it in ten minutes, Kitty.”

“ May Jane and I go to Mr. Sniggs’s?” asked Kate.

“ Ask Harriet,” replied I, glad to shift some of the responsibility of what was going on upon some other shoulders.

“ Oh,” said Kate, “ *she* won’t let us go.”

“ She !” thought I.

“ Come,” said Wells, “ there is not a moment to be lost.”

“ I’ll be back directly,” said I to the girls.

“ Mr. Nubley,” said I, “ do me the favour to entertain the young ladies for five minutes, till I come back.”

“ Oh, the old Gig,! ” said Kate ; and away she and her sister ran, laughing through their grief in the most obstreperous manner.

Another loud ring preceded the announcement of Mrs. Sniggs, who never before had set foot

in the house except on a Twelfth Night, when she brought two dancing-girls who had no particular relations, but who, presuming upon Cuthbert's message, now made her appearance to consult with the Miss Falwassers about mourning. A talk followed, the prelude to which I could not stop to hear ; but hurrying to the library with my much-excited father in law, I left the girls and the apothecary's wife in earnest conversation in the hall, and saw Nubley creep out of the glass-door at the back of the house to take his accustomed after-breakfast stroll in a walk well sheltered by evergreens.

CHAPTER VI.

“ You cannot imagine anything like this man’s conduct,” said Wells, trembling with quite as much rage as became a clergyman—“ positively throws us over—of course he knows I cannot fight him, at least with decency, and so insults me.”

At the moment, agitated as I was, I could not help thinking of a joke of Wells’s own, in which he once suggested, in the case of a quarrel between two bishops, the propriety of their going out to settle their difference with a brace of *minor canons*.

“ What shall I do with him ?” said Wells.

I certainly did not feel at the moment parti-

cularly competent to give advice, but I looked all attention to the appeal.

"Read his letter, Gilbert," continued my father-in-law, handing it to me, "that's all—only just read it."

I knew my fate, and bowed submission, although I wanted no "documents" to confirm me in the opinion I had formed of the above Lieutenant.

"*Diansgrove*, — 18.

"DEAR SIR,—I do assure you that no circumstances of my life ever gave me so much pain as those which in my mind render it necessary that I should address this letter to you—I am quite sure that you will receive it in the spirit in which it is written, and that you will, before you have reached its termination, feel equally satisfied with myself that the course I have adopted is that which is best calculated to ensure the happiness of two persons in whom (in different degrees, I admit) you are under all the circumstances, deeply interested.

"The long intercourse which I have had the

gratification of enjoying with your amiable family, has given me the best opportunity of forming the highly favourable opinion of Miss Wells which I have ventured to express to you, and which I believe was not ill-received by the young lady herself; in fact I saw as I have repeatedly avowed, nothing but a bright prospect of happiness with her in that union which you were pleased to sanction.

“ You will recollect, dear Sir, that at the time when my aunt, Miss Pennefather, from whose house I now write, made a proposition to me with regard to a fortune to become mine, saddled with a condition which would inevitably destroy the hopes of comfort which I then anticipated with Miss Fanny, I made such a communication as induced you to leave me open to choose between the object of my affections and the mere worldly advantage to be derived from its abandonment. My conduct proved the strength of my attachment to your daughter, and I returned hastily and happily to the bosom of your family, in which I passed so

many delightful hours, and I honestly confess that the reception I met with from Miss Fanny was most gratifying to me; although I must admit that I did not think the conduct of Mrs. Wells afforded any striking proof of her sympathy with the feelings of her daughter; indeed, on the contrary, it appeared to me that her manner towards me was considerably changed, and her bearing was such as to convey an impression to my mind that she imagined I ought not to have listened to my aunt's suggestion in the first instance.

"Now, dear Sir, I should perhaps here mention that my Aunt, Miss Laura Pennefather, uniformly acts upon the highest principle, and that although her affection for *me* induced her to draw my attention to what she calls 'worldly interests,' (however highly she herself soars above such considerations,) the moment she found that it was impossible for me to overcome the affection which I confessed to her I felt for your amiable daughter, she made the arrangement which I subsequently communicated to

you, by which she divided between myself and her *protégé* the sum which, independently of what she may otherwise leave, she had intended to bequeath entire for *her* fortune if she had married *me*.

“ Having conscientiously and upon principle fairly made the sacrifice—if sacrifice that can be considered which merely surrenders the world’s goods, keeping the heart’s feelings still secure, I returned to your house ; and as I hoped, and I need not say wished, all seemed to go on well. I repeat, that Mrs. Wells’s manner was not altogether agreeable : however, when a man really loves—and I appeal to you as one who *has* loved in the sense of the words in which I now use them—there are few obstacles which are invincible ; and I resolved to bear up against whatever I felt irksome, and look forward to the consummation of my happiness in my approaching union with Miss Wells :—but I am sure you will forgive me,—circumstances did occur, to which I have already alluded in conversation with Miss Wells, which gave me much pain.

“ You have, during our acquaintance, and so indeed has your son-in-law, Mr. Gilbert Gurney, taken many opportunities of alluding in terms of a not very particularly qualified character to my political feelings and principles—to this there can be no possible objection—but it shows the *animus*, as it is called—and when, in addition to the intolerant political spirit which seems to govern your clerical conduct, I find in you and your family a disposition to ridicule what I consider the true course of religious feeling, and hear you indulging in a jocose manner upon topics which I have been taught never to touch without reverence, I begin to think that a connexion between us would lead to no favourable results.

“ My Aunt, Miss, or as she now calls herself, Mrs. Pennefather, is one of those rigidly correct persons, whose feelings are outraged by the slightest deviation from the strict path of piety and rectitude—she has questioned me constantly and deeply on the subject of Miss Wells’s religious principles, and I have always met her

searching inquiries by the unanswerable—as I thought—answer, that she was the daughter of a clergyman of the Church of England. This to a certain extent satisfied her scruples, nice and delicate upon such points, as she is; but I think it only candid and right to say that the conversation which took place with regard to the bishop—and my aunt has always a suspicion of the episcopal character—who examined a candidate for orders in an antichristian author, has so completely alienated my mind from the respect due to the sacred profession which you pursue, as to render it impossible, consistently with my expectations of happiness, to fulfil the engagements with Miss Wells, which, at least, by implication, I have entered into.

“ It may be as well, dear Sir, to say that so far as our secular feelings are concerned, I have nothing to offer but unqualified praise of your abilities, and thanks for your unbounded hospitality; but taking higher views, for which I am sure you cannot blame me, I must beg leave, however painful the task, to decline all further

communication with your family, with reference to any more particular connexion. I do not imagine it likely that you will be inclined to carry this matter further; but should you do so, I shall be happy to furnish you with the name of my attorney—for myself, I have been relieved from the recruiting service in England, and shall join my regiment in Spain in a few weeks. All I hope is, that you will favour me with a few lines to tell me that you are not offended with the course I have taken; and as for Miss Wells, I am sure she is too implicit a follower of her mother's advice, and participates too much in her opinions, to regret the loss of,

“ Dear Sir, your faithful servant,
“ PHILIP MERMAN.”

“ Well, Gilbert,” said Wells, when I had finished reading,—“ now what do you think of that?”

The question was a very startling one. The letter was a most unprincipled attack, upon a ground perfectly untenable by the writer; and

when this natural conclusion is come to, there must be added the fact, that, as far as I was concerned, I was delighted at the break off—my answer, if it were to be given in a purely independent spirit, was a puzzler.

“Why”—said I, somewhat hesitatingly,—“it seems to me that this gentleman has some underground reason for backing out of what must be considered a settled engagement. He even hints at law—now that sort of husband-hunting would not be good for dear Fanny’s reputation or respectability; and as for his morality or piety—the excuse is mere trash. The question in my mind is, how much Fanny will care for the loss of him, and what injury his defection will do her.”

“None,” said Wells,—“no injury whatever—you don’t suppose that I care one farthing for what the world of Blissfold say—besides, they are not aware of the varying state of his affections—of his going off and coming on—we are not here like kings and queens, whose every-day transactions are recorded in the

newspapers—he is gone—let him go—what say you, Gilbert?”

“I should say ‘Ditto to Mr. Burke,’ ” said I—“but again I ask, what will our Fanny say?”

“Why, ‘Ditto to Mr. Gurney,’ as I think,” said Wells. “She is a straight-forward, plane-sailing girl—naturally enough wishing to be married—you know my principles upon that point.—Well, and as long as everything went smooth, and they were attached to each other, and all that—why, well and good—but I believe she is very much attached to *me*—and I believe that the mode in which he prepared for his retreat by assailing my character, has very much curdled the kindness she had all along felt towards him. The plea is ridiculous—the pretence absurd—rely upon it, Gilbert, you are right in thinking that there is more in this affair than the letter discloses or even admits. My opinion is, that as I mean of course to take no further steps to recall him, or force him into a marriage, far the best plan will be to leave his

letter unanswered—to take no notice of him—but permit him to enjoy his liberty and campaigning without interruption."

"In this scheme," said I, "I perfectly agree;" and so I did, upon various grounds. I certainly thought the notion of suing such a man for a breach of promise of marriage, even if it could be brought home to him, would be—always taking Wells's principles upon matrimony into the question—ruinous to my poor sister-in-law. And as to any attempt at recalling him by fair means, I held that it would be beyond measure derogatory to the whole family, not to speak of its personal and particular annoyance to myself.

"Well then," said Wells, "shall I keep my counsel, and say nothing about the letter, but treat the fellow with silent contempt?"

"That," said I, "is the plan—he has behaved outrageously—and if you had a son, I suppose they would be opposite to each other twelve paces apart to-morrow morning; but as it is, let the thing drop—let him hear no more. Of

course you will talk it over with Fanny, and unless Sniggs ferrets out the truth, the whole affair will die away in a week."

"I'll take your advice," said Wells—"never show your teeth, when you can't—or at least don't mean to bite. So let it be agreed—mum—I shall talk to Fan—but that is all—*she* won't break her heart, *I* know."

"But," said I, thinking of my own perplexities, "what do you think of Mrs. Sniggs's coming here as deputy Brandyball, superseding all our authority, and proposing to take the girls out shopping?"

"Impossible," said Wells.

"So, from what I can gather, is the fact," said I,—"and will you believe it?—you, who so well remember poor Tom, and his manner, and his face, and his nose, and all—they have sent me an inscription and epitaph for his tomb —will you look at it?—see—just read it—I assure you it is a curiosity."

Saying which, I produced the effusion which I had thrust into my pocket.

Wells looked over the inscription—the eulogistic inscription to the memory of the lost, and laughed as loudly as any man professing his principles could be expected to laugh who had just lost a son-in-law.

“ What d’ye think of *that*?” said I.

“ Put this by for the present,” said Wells; doubling up the paper, “ these things are for days to come. What’s doing now? that’s the point.”

“ Why,” said I, “ I am about the last person to ask: I declare myself wholly in the dark. We have got a new character on the stage now that Mrs. Sniggs has made her appearance.”

“ Where is Sniggs himself?” asked Wells.

“ I have not seen him since the day before yesterday,” said I; “ he avoids me: he has smelt out where the influence in this family lies; and now, upon the authority of a letter from Bath, deputes his lady to supersede my wife in her arrangements with the young ladies about mourning.”

“ It is odd,” said Wells.

"It is disgusting," said I.

"Well," said my father-in-law, "if you agree with me, that silent contempt is the line with regard to the lieutenant, we need discuss that matter no further—say nothing to poor dear Harriet in the midst of her other vexations—I will have my talk over with Fan at home, and regulate my conduct according to the symptoms she discovers; but under no circumstances will I do anything further without consulting you."

"You flatter me," said I: "but is the Lieutenant gone, as they say, for good?"

"Why," said Wells, "I am not one of those who go hunting about, and ferreting out news; but I hear that he is gone 'altogether and intirely out of this,' as my friend Colonel O'Flynn says, and who tells me that he has quitted the place in his military capacity—whether this be so or not, I do not pretend to say—but I do not think it likely he will show himself here again in a civil character."

"I should think not," said I; "of one thing assure yourself, I am firm in my approval of the

course you have now adopted, so let us go to the breakfast-room and see what is going on there."

And away we went ; Wells very much calmed by finding that I entertained a similar opinion to his own ; and when we arrived in the hall, we found Jane Falwasser lingering—I dare say she had been listening—about the door of the library, evidently with the view of making some communication to me.

" Well, Jane," said I, " where is Kate? I suppose she will show me her letter, or at least tell me what my brother desires her to do."

" Kate is gone, uncle," said Jane.

" Gone where ?" asked I.

" Gone with Mrs. Sniggs," replied Jane ; " she told her that she was to go with her to buy anything she wanted at Twig and Dilberry's, and afterwards she is going home with Mrs. Sniggs to see her poor brother Tom in his coffin."

" Indeed," said I ; " does Mrs. Gurney know of this ?"

" No, uncle," said Jane ; " Pappy, or at least, Mrs. Brandyball, had written to Mr.

Sniggs to desire his wife to do whatever she chose—he is so delighted with Mr. Sniggs's coming to him, and all that; and so Kate said she did not care who said she was not to go, if Pappy said she *was* to go,—and so she is gone.”

“ And why did you not go?” said I.

“ Because I thought Aunt Harriet did not wish it,” said Jane: “ if I could have spoken to you and asked your leave, I would have gone, because I know Kate will be cross with me for not going with her; but I could not, Uncle Gilbert; I could not, even then, have borne to see my poor brother—I would have gone to the house, but not into the room.”

“ Jane,” said I, “ you are a kind-hearted girl, and a good girl; and I thank you for your consideration of us while under our roof; but still more do I praise you for your feeling with regard to your poor brother: and when,” continued I, “ have they fixed for the funeral?”

“ The day after to-morrow,” said Jane; “ and Kate tells me that there is to be music in the church, and a dirge played; and the organist is

away, and so Kate has got Mrs. Sniggs to ask Mr. Kittington to play the dirge, because there is nobody else in Blissfold who can play the organ, and *he* can."

"Umph!" said Wells; "a dancing-master do a dirge in *my* church! But, my dear child, I have heard nothing of all this: somewhat of these arrangements depends upon me."

"I don't know," said Jane; "all I tell you is in Kate's letter."

Wells and I exchanged glances; but we spake not. I confess I looked at Jane with feelings far different from those which I had previously entertained towards her. It was evident from the first, that, although to a certain extent under her influence, and spoiled by an association with her, she was of a very superior order of girl to Kate. She felt the difficulty and delicacy, or rather indelicacy, of leaving Ashmead contrary to the wish of the mistress of the house, and without some qualifying consent of its master, who was so nearly connected with her.

Not so Kate. Off she went, delighted at an excuse to get out, and convinced that, in order to smooth away the difficulty of the dirge, she could prevail upon the unconscious Mrs. Sniggs to call upon Mr. Kittington to make the necessary arrangements for his performance of that much desired, although not usual, piece of solemnity.

The thing that annoyed me most, and it rankled—and what a fool I must have been to let it rankle—was the absence of Sniggs himself. His lady wife muttered something about his patients—absurdity ! when four days before, he was satisfied to leave all he had—and such an all!—to the care of a friend or an assistant. No; it was too clear: he was aware of the exact state of my power and importance, and (as I before thought) of the probability that the days of my residence at Ashmead were numbered. He was to come up in the afternoon—so his message said—but how different was this formally announced visit from the constant hoppaboutishness, as

Mrs. Nubley called it, with which he previously paged our heels and anticipated our slightest wishes !

“ Well,” said I, “ there is one consolation ; the fault is not my own.”

“ Now,” said Wells, “ I will go home, and having fortified myself with your support, tell Fanny the course I think we ought to pursue. She loves her father, Gilbert, as I hope and believe all my girls do ; and the Lieutenant could not have taken a surer mode of curing her of her affection for *him*, than by unjustly and coarsely impugning *my* character or conduct. I will go to her directly, and most probably we shall come up here in the course of the afternoon. The walk ‘ will do her good ; besides, I will not suffer her to hide away from the eyes of the two-and-twenty’ public of Blissfold ; she has done nothing unbecoming or improper, and she shall not seem cast down by the misbehaviour of this extremely ill-conducted man.”

And away went Wells in exactly that sort of humour in which I wished to see him, resolved

to stand up manfully against a most unjustifiable proceeding, conscious that nobody could, or would, or, if they would, should misrepresent the conduct of either himself or his family.

When he left me I asked Jane if she would like to come up with me to her aunt's room. I was anxious to tell Harriet how deeply I felt the difference between her conduct and that of her sister, and to tell her so in the girl's presence. While Kate was with her and exercised her control over her, Jane giggled, and laughed, and made faces, and did ten thousand unseemly things, less, as I believe, from entering into the views and principles of her elder sister, than because she was really afraid of incurring her displeasure by affecting a diffidence which her senior would call dissimulation, or practising a propriety which she would pronounce prudery. When she was out of her presence she was gentle, calm, and rational.

I saw that Harriet was surprised at my being so accompanied, but when I explained to her the excursion of Miss Kitty, and the reasons

why the quiet Jenny declined to accompany her, my wife's coldly set features—for she could not look regularly cross—relaxed into an agreeable expression of complacency, which was followed shortly after by a beckoning invitation to Jenny to come and sit by her on the sofa. I saw that Jenny felt this mark of kindness. Harriet till then had made no great distinction in her attentions to the sisters; the change had a great effect upon a tender heart—a heart which seemed to me worth saving from the wreck which threatened that of Kate.

Having made up this little treaty of peace, I thought it right to seek out the Nubleys, who generally retired to their room about noon to talk over their business with regard to Chittagong; for although Nubley had been now two whole days and part of a third located within walking distance of the concern, he had never yet ventured to take any steps to ascertain how the Thompsons were actually comporting themselves in his *château*. Before I reached their apartment, they were, however, both absent, and

I concluded that he had at length “screwed his courage to the sticking place,” and marched forth to take a view of the premises, or rather, perhaps, to hold council with the auctioneer, &c., who had let the house for him to these unseemly tenants, but to whom Nubley had, from a sort of indefinable delicacy, not yet spoken on the subject, because he happened also to be the undertaker employed to conduct the obsequies of poor Tom.

Time, and as it appears, no great length of it, brings many more things to light than philosophy dreams of, and we were destined just at this period of the day to be illuminated upon the subject of Lieutenant Merman’s departure, in a manner, from a quarter, and to an extent which certainly none of us could possibly have anticipated. This circumstance was most fortunate for the peace and happiness of Fanny, who, without some almost miraculous interposition, could not have been expected, indignant as she naturally felt at his precipitate conduct, to banish upon the instant from her mind and

memory—for I really believe her heart was even yet unscathed—an avowed suitor who had been so long and constantly her companion, whose passion for astronomy was quite as ardent as mine had been before my happy union with Harriet, and who, with infinitely less sentiment in his composition than I, in those days, possessed, used to stroll on the bright summer's evenings through those well-known walks where first I had unconsciously learned to hate *him* and love my wife.

The truth is, that the domestic history of the rectory had been for the last few months “progressing,” as the Americans have it, much after the fashion of a Spanish comedy, in which the ladies have maid-servants and the gentlemen have men-servants, who invariably go and “come like shadows” of their masters and mistresses, and who, besides seconding the endeavours of their principals in bringing about a happy conclusion to their adventures, while away time by performing parts exactly similar, only in a lower degree.

The girls at the Rectory have amongst them a trusty *soubrette*, who, when Foxcroft followed her mistress, undertook the duty of attendance on both Fanny and Bessy ; and a nice, modest, rosy-cheeked girl she is. Lieutenant Merman's servant—not a soldier—was naturally a good deal about the Rectory, and being what is called an uncommonly smart fellow, Sally Kerridge was not altogether insensible to the sly looks with which he accompanied the delivery of any *billet* sent “special” to Miss Fanny Wells, and delivered direct into the said Sally's hand. As time wore on, looks came to words, and it certainly had been remarked by the minor scandal-mongers of Blissfold that Sally Kerridge and the Captain's (Captain by Blissfold brevet) man were not unfrequently seen walking together in the evenings, when *his* master and *her* mistress were doing the same thing elsewhere. Whether the Captain's man sought brighter stars than Sally's eyes, or contented himself with reading his fate there, the records of Blissfold do not inform us ; but certain it is, that when matters

were drawing to a close, as we all supposed, and Miss Wells was about to become Mrs. Merman, Miss Kerridge did venture to inquire of her young mistress as to her intentions respecting the tenure of the appointment which she held about her person, and whether she was to accompany her in her then capacity or remain with Miss Bessy at the Rectory.

The answer which Fanny gave, without at all comprehending the extent of its import, was so favourable to the hopes of the applicant, that she and Mr. Thomas Lazenby speedily came to an understanding; in consequence whereof Mr. Thomas Lazenby was duly accepted by Miss Sally Kerridge; a developement of the tender engagement being only delayed until the marriage of the principals should be formally announced.

Now, under these circumstances, and considering that Thomas was the confidential minister of the Lieutenant, and so essential to his comfort that he could not even travel half a day's journey without him, it struck Tom as

exceedingly odd, that when his master took his departure for his Aunt Pennefather's, he thought proper to dispense with his services. It was extremely agreeable to Tom that he did so, because it left him master of his time during his absence ; but still he wondered, and was fidgetty, inasmuch as the moment a favourite servant finds out that his patron *can* do without him for a little, he generally begins to suspect that he will, not very long after, do without him entirely. So it was, however, and Tom's worst anticipations were realised by hearing from Sally that she verily believed it was all off between the Captain and her young lady.

The Lieutenant returned, and it was all “on again ;” Tom banished his doubts ; Sally dismissed her fears, and everything “progressed” as before. These halcyon days, however, were not to last for ever, and when the Lieutenant for a second time quitted Blissfold, a second time did he leave Tom behind him.

Matters, although the cases so far were parallel, nevertheless did not run so regularly upon this

occasion, for the same post which brought my worthy father-in-law *the* letter which so infuriated him, brought a note to Tom from the Lieutenant, directing him to pay off whatever bills might be owing in the place, to deliver an accompanying inclosed letter to the sergeant, and then to come forthwith to him at Mrs. Pennefather's, bringing the sergeant with him, as he had business to transact with him which must be done before his successor in the recruiting service should arrive at Blissfold ; and moreover, to pack up his things, and lose no time in obeying his instructions.

“ It’s all over, Sally,” said Tom ; “ it’s *my* belief the affair with Miss Fanny is entirely and regularly floored.”

“ I think so, too,” said Sally, “ for, my dear Tom, she has been crying all the morning, and master has been storming about like mad : rely upon it that never will be a match.”

“ Isn’t that a pretty business ?” said Tom.
“ I’m ordered off with the sergeant at half-an-

hour's warning, pack and baggage ; and perhaps, Sally, we may never meet again."

" We !" said Sally. " Why, Tom, what have we to do with them ? *We* have had no quarrel—*my* father is not the Parson of Blissfold, nor is *your* aunt going to make you marry somebody else."

" No," said Tom, " that's quite true, Sally ; but then, if my master does not marry at all?—perhaps, too, he may be going abroad—why then, what should we do ? I should not like you to be lady's-maid to an unmarried lieutenant, don't you see ?"

" No, I don't see," said Sally. " Give up his service, and I'll give up mine, and we will try and better ourselves, and set up a shop."

" A shop !" said Tom. " Isn't that low ? Shopkeeper don't sound well."

" Sound well !" said Sally. " I think it sounds uncommon well. Half the great people in England are shopkeepers."

" Yes, Sally," said Tom, " but we should

never be great people. As it is, you see, here we are: the Lieutenant finds me clothes, meat, drink, and lodging, and pays me four-and-twenty pounds a-year for eating his mutton, sitting by his fire, reading his books, drinking his wine, carrying his letters, and walking about with *you*. Miss Fanny is nearly as civil to *you*. Now, suppose we resign promiscuously—as the great folks say, throw up office,—and start, like Romulus and Remus in Shakspeare's *Paradise Lost*,

‘The world before us where to choose.’

Well, Sally, we choose — Gosport, for instance——”

“Gos——” exclaimed Sally.

“Well, not Gosport,” interrupted Tom. “I only mentioned Gosport because it first came incontinently into my head; and we marry——”

“Well, I’m sure, Tom!” said Sally.

“Oh, yes, Sally,” said Tom, “I mean all that. Well, and before we marry——”

“Well?” said Sally anxiously. “What before we marry?”

"We settle upon some genteel occupation," said Tom, "in the green-grocery line, for instance. 'Table-beer, sold here,' eh? Or, in the chandlery, 'Licensed to deal in pepper, tea, and tobacco,' or whatever it may be. So much for coming in and fixtures — then we must furnish; — then comes the rent — the taxes — stock to buy — mutton — bread — butter — beer — (sherry, port, and madeira wholly out of the question) — coals — candles — salt — mustard — everything in the mortal world, and no wages whatever."

"But then one is independent," said Sally.

"So far as having nothing to depend upon," said Tom "No, Sally, don't let us be in a hurry; let us see how the land lies. This matter betwixt my master and Miss has been off before, — it may come on again. I'll go, as he bids me. I'll find out all how and about it at our Aunt's, and write you a full, true, and particular account of the whole preliminaries. I should be glad if we could manage so as to continue with him, if it can be done with propriety Sally, for, although

he does not seem aware of it, I assure you, my dear *charymee*, he has a treasure of a servant in Thomas Lazenby."

"But, then, Tom," said Miss Kerridge, (who was really very fond of her "young ladies,") "supposing the Captain marries somebody else?"

"There you have hit it, Sally," said Tom; "that's it. Why, then, and in that case, you know, we could both favour them incontinently with our attentions."

"What, and leave Miss Fanny?" said Sally.

"We won't talk of that now," said Tom; "it mayn't be necessary. We may be all wrong, and all may come right at last; so, as the sergeant is waiting, and the chaise ready, I'll be off, and by this very night's post I'll write. What, Sally; d'ye think I won't?" added Tom, with one of those looks which invariably lead to a practical result.

The answer was given—not in words—and after this chaste salute, Tom ran off towards his master's late lodgings, Sally's eyes never quitting

the object of her affections till an envious corner hid him from her gaze.

“He *will* write,” said Sally to herself, as she walked towards the Rectory at a pace that would have indicated to any observer the agitation of her mind;—“I know he will write; and if his master is going to be married—but he cannot—well, I won’t think of *that*—I—no—I *could* not leave the young ladies—yet—I love Tom—and—oh, dear, dear! I declare, I have forgot Miss Fanny’s crape after all,” and suddenly turning herself about, Sally Kerridge hurried back to Twig and Dilberry’s, the Swan and Edgar’s of Blissfold, where she encountered the weeping Kitty buying love of one of the shop-boys under the fostering auspices of the apothecary’s wife.

The result of the parting promise of Tom to Miss Kerridge was his complete exposure of Lieutenant Merman’s conduct throughout the affair with Fanny. On the following day the promised letter came, and having been read and re-read by those bright eyes to which it was specially addressed, was brought up to Miss

Wells by her faithful maid, who, irritated to the highest pitch by the conduct of the Lieutenant to her Tom, suddenly resolved on “showing the soger officer up” to her young lady, not calculating that, however consolatory Miss Fanny’s entire separation from him might in consequence be, the memory of his deceit and defection would necessarily prey heavily upon her mind.

“Miss Fanny,” said Kerridge, entering the room pensively, her eyes red with crying, “I beg you a thousand pardons, but I do think you ought to know what a vile wretch that Captain Merman is.”

“Kerridge,” said Fanny, “do you know whom you are speaking to?”

“Yes, Miss Fanny, to you — dear Miss Fanny, to you,” said Sally; “do you know he has turned away Tom?”

“Who is Tommy?” said Fanny.

“My Tommy, Miss Fanny,” said Kerridge.

“Your Tommy!” said Miss Wells.

“Yes, Miss, my Tommy, his Tommy;” and Kerridge burst into tears: “however, *I haven’t*

turned him off—nor has he turned *me* off—and, I dare say, he'll be here to-morrow ; but that is not it, Miss—it is about his brute of a master —thank goodness, he is *not* his master—it's about you, Miss. The way he has treated you, Miss. Oh ! shameful."

" Why, Kerridge," said Fanny, " you are mad, I think."

" Not I, Miss," said Sally. " Here, Miss, do take and read this letter."

" Who is it from ?" said Fanny.

" It is from Tommy, Miss," replied Sally ; " but it will tell you the whole story."

" I really cannot think of doing any such thing," said Fanny ; " and I must beg you to leave me, and take your letter with you, and I desire you will not talk in this manner again."

" I mean no harm, Miss," said the poor girl, " indeed I don't ; but it so shameful—I can't——"

At this period of the dialogue a slight tap at the door announced a visitor ; the " Come in" of Fanny was followed by the appearance of her

father, who had some communication to make, but who drew back upon seeing Miss Kerridge in tears.

“ What is the matter ?” said Wells.

“ Oh, nothing, Sir,” said the weeping damsel ; “ only, Sir, I have had a letter from Thomas, and it tells all about the Captain, and I wish my young lady to read it, and she won’t : perhaps you will, Sir ; indeed you should, for you don’t know half what a man he is.”

“ Well,” said my father-in-law, “ although I entirely approve of your young lady’s refusal to read the letter, I am sure you are actuated by the best motives.”

“ Aye, that I am, Sir,” said Sally, wiping her eyes in a delicate muslin apron.

“ And if you think the family ought to be made acquainted with its contents, I will read it. Who is it from did you say ?”

“ My Thomas, Sir,” said Kerridge, colouring very red.

“ Your Thomas ?” said Mr. Wells.

“ Yes, Sir,” said Sally ; “ I will tell you all

that another time, Sir ; we have to ask you about it, Sir ; but—Sir—he is the Captain's servant.”

“ Captain !” said Wells, who was just in the humour to put down Merman, and put up anybody else ; “ call him Lieutenant, child—and don’t cry. Is Thomas the man who used to sit in your pew at church ?”

“ Yes, Sir,” said Kerridge ; “ he never missed twice a day every Sunday—besides the winter six o’clock lecture.”

“ Well,” said my father-in-law, “ leave the letter in my hands, and I will tell you what I think of Thomas when I have read it.”

“ Oh, it isn’t of him, Sir,” said Sally, “ you won’t think any harm, I know, for there is not any kind of harm in him, Sir ; if there had been, he would not have been so well thought of by me.”

“ Well, Kerridge,” said the Rector, “ I again say I thank you for your anxiety about my daughter. You shall have your letter back in a few minutes.”

"Thank you, Sir," said Kerridge, and she turned to leave the room; but just as she had got to the door a sudden thought seemed to strike her, and turning quickly round she looked wistfully in Wells's face, and said, with all the naïveté imaginable, "I beg your pardon, Sir,—please don't look at the little bit that's under the fold of the direction."

"Rely upon me, Kerridge," said the Rector; and Kerridge evanished.

Whether Wells read the letter while in Fanny's room, or in her presence, I do not recollect; all I know is that he showed it to me, having posted up to Ashmead expressly for the purpose. I hastily copied it all, except "the little bit under the fold," which I held sacred—at least as far as transcribing went.

"*Diansgrove*,—, 18—.

"According to promise dear Sarah I write although I have but little time to spare. First and foremost, I shall be out of the Captain's service before this time to-morrow—he has no

fault to find with me, he says, and will give me an excellent character but he does not wish for particular reasons that I should continue with him—which particular reasons is merely and promiscuously this, namely that I know all his goings on with Miss Fanny—and the way in which he has behaved, which between you and me and the bed-post turns out to be most shocking. If I was to treat you in corresponding style you would annihilate me, and I would deserve it—but I won't dear Sarah—never.

“ What do you think—I knew something was going wrong as I told you by his leaving me behind when he came here on his first visit to Miss Penfeather or whatever his aunt's name is—when he made ready to present himself to Miss Malooney—I don't exactly know the topography of her name—she was non compos as they say, that is, nowhere to be found—upon which his aunt was in a pretty quandary and fell into high streaks and was miscellaneousy distracted—mind I had the whole of the pedigree from one of Mrs. Pennefeather's maids

called Susan, who was an eye-witness to the entire transaction.

“ Well—Miss Malooney you understand, had evaporated out of the house before dinner and continued in that state for three days, having wrote a letter to Miss Pennefeather to say she would not have my master if his skin was stuffed with guineas, for she had given her heart to another—a tall stout gentleman (unless I misunderstand Susan) with green earings—I knew he was an Irishman and I think that was what Susan said he wore—but I have been here only so few hours that I think I must simultaneously astonish you to think how I have contrived to get into all their little secrets so soon.

“ Well dear Sarah so, this being the case and Miss Malooney gone, my master couldn’t marry her because she wouldn’t have him, and because besides that she was irrecoverably out of the way—so—Miss Penfeather or whatever it is, told him—mind I had this from Susan who has been helping me to put the Captain’s room to rights—for the last time but one indiscri-

minately, Sarah dear—that she would give him half the ten thousand pounds—that is after her death, that he was to have had during his life with Miss Malooney—and he might marry incontinently and surreptitiously anybody he pleased—and with that, dear Sarah he went back to me and the Parsonage and whistled the business on again relying upon the inflexible tuberosity of Miss Fanny's affection for him.

“ Now, comes the elasticity of the co-operation. Back he comes and as we know dear, Miss Fanny instinctively receives him again into her favour upon the incipient principle and up they go to Ashmead. ‘ Give me my best stock,’ I recollect the Captain saying to me —‘ Lazenby, take care that the strings of my waistcoat don’t come out under my jacket because they are not overclean.’ And I remember giving him out his bottle of jeu d’esprit to scent his handkerchief, and rub up the back of his hair with to set him off to the best advantage, and he put on his best pantaloons made by Stools of Clifford Street which show off the gentleman to real

advantage—that is Sarah if there is anything of the gentleman about the wearer—and dear Sarah I will say confidently between you and me and the bed-post if he wasn't a gentleman with the King's admission very little of the quality of one would be found in him—but as I was saying insidiously, up he went—well and it was all kiss and make friends and all that, and so very well—but now comes what Lady Teazle says in Otway's Clandestine Marriage ‘the damned spot.’ What do you think dearest S. Miss Malooney after having been gone as I before contumaciously heard for three days and nights comes back to Diansgrove—that's the name of this place—throws herself into Miss Pennfeather's arms and confides to her the elemosynary circumstance that she has not been able to find the gentleman with the green ear-rings to whom she had given her heart.

“ My dear Sarah to use the words of my favourite Dr. Dryden—whose poems I have read—and which you shall when we two are one—says with immaculate expression—‘ this is fudge,

all fudge'—for Susan told me from circumstances which I will hereafter emanate to you that she knows for certain that she did find him, and saw him, and elucidated him upon the point, and that after two days and three nights constant endeavours on her part to make him behave to her like a gentleman, he told her she was labouring under an entire misconception of the state of his infections, and *cut que cut* forced her home to her aunt's.

" When she came back—it was Susan says—such a scene—weeping and wailing—because she had not found her friend—‘ Mam’—says Susan ‘ that wont do—we know better.’ And so in this state of betwixity and betweenity, what does the aunt do but write to the Captain and gives him another chance at Miss Mellicent, who having been out on her travels is glad enough to take him indiscriminately on his own terms; and so then he says fortunately enough—done and done—and so Miss says done and done too, and then the thing is all done together, what's past cant be recalled, so they wipe it all

up and say nothing more about it, and the Captain sends to Miss Fanny's father, and tells him a long story about a cock and a bull, which indiscriminately relates to the chap in the green ear-rings—and so that's the plain fact.

“ Sarah my dear I am delighted that Captain Merman—who between you and me and the bed-post is no more a captain than Billy Rattan the old sergeant here—has distinctly and intuitively turned me off. I couldn't have stopped with him after this explosion—and I am certain you would not have permitted yourself to have been conglomerated with Miss Malooney under any circumstances—Susan says she would not for the world, and Mrs. Gibson who was Miss Malooney's maid has, to use the words of Shenstone, in his “Deserted Village,” ‘hopped the twig’ in disgust.

“ Tomorrow night dear Sarah I shall be at Blissfold—but as I promised to write I have written—tomorrow about eight o'clock I will be at the old place and——”

Here I came to the turned-down passage, and

wrote no further, quite satisfied with the exposure of as much meanness, hypocrisy, and heartlessness as ever characterised a man, who, to use Mr. Lazenby's words, "was, by his Majesty's admission," a gentleman. I confess I was not at all sorry—even if the means by which we came to the knowledge of his real character were not perhaps strictly legitimate, that we had anyhow arrived at it; it could not fail to smooth all difficulties with regard to our poor Fanny, who could no longer continue to regret a lover who, if he had not in the first instance been attracted to her by the expectation of money, had committed the negative, if not positive, crime of giving her up when something better in the way of fortune tempted him.

In the hourly alternating life I lead, I declare the hour in which the certainty of my never seeing Lieutenant Merman more was unquestionably established in my mind, was one of the most agreeable I had passed for some time. It is strange enough that I always felt a *presentiment* that it never would be a match—a match

it never could have been—a pair, I mean ; and although I am not more superstitious than my neighbours, and, to my delight and exultation, not so superstitious as many who are vastly and immeasurably my superiors in years and intellect, I do sometimes think that such things as *presentiments* are often verified by the events.

There is another sensation which I have often experienced, for which I can by no means whatever account, nor am I at all aware that it is peculiar to myself or common to everybody, nor am I aware that having noticed it, I am capable of explaining what I mean. The sensation I refer to is a feeling during the progress of a conversation, or of the occurrence of the ordinary events of society, that everything I hear and see at the moment, I have somehow and somewhere heard and seen before. I do not mean merely the same words or the same actions, but I mean both words and actions arising out of the passing events exactly in the same order and under precisely similar circumstances. It has not unfrequently happened to me to be so com-

pletely under the influence of this strange apprehension, that I have literally started with surprise when some one of the party present has uttered the very words I had previously expected to hear from his lips. All that Wells said—naturally enough, to be sure, resulting from the circumstances which had occurred, arising out of the receipt of the Lieutenant's letter of one day, and the footman's on the next —came to my ears, as it seemed to me, for the second time ;—not that the expression of his resolution upon the point would have been less welcome if it had been the hundredth repetition of it.

Here we had secured the complete exposure of this man's whole scheme. Loving the army as I do, esteeming, nay venerating those brave men who are from day to day and from hour to hour distinguishing themselves in defending the cause and raising the name and character of England to the highest pitch of glory, my blood chilled with regret, may I say indignation, that amongst those glorious protectors, the pride of

our nation, there should be found such a cur—a cur—what other word would meet the case?—as this Lieutenant Merman. “Now,” said I to myself, “now I see why this fellow has so long lingered here recruiting.” It might however have been, for I know nothing of the routine of these matters, that he was forced in his tour of duty, to Philander and play the flute at his lodgings in our peaceful town, instead of following his gallant companions in arms to the Peninsula; all I was certain of, was that here he did loiter and linger, and that until domestic matters seemed to promise war even in our peaceful town, he gave no sign of going: perhaps, as I say, it was what they call his tour of duty, or something which I do not comprehend, and that it was not his fault, but his misfortune, that he remained strolling about the laurel walks in my father-in-law’s gardens in Hampshire, instead of gathering glorious bunches for himself in the field of glory in the face of an avowed enemy. So it was—and what a sequel to his other proceedings was his conduct at the

appropriately named villa of his virgin aunt Diansgrove.

The style in which his servant wrote was somewhat amusing, but it was evident that the view he took of the whole case was tolerably correct. It occurred to me, I admit, that after my father-in-law's condescension in accepting the perusal of the letter, and his consequent admission or permission—implied, if not expressed—of the attachment existing between Miss Kerridge and Mr. Lazenby, that Mr. Lazenby would inevitably become a kind of appendage to one or other of the establishments at the Rectory or Ashmead ; and then again—there was nothing I could think of, nothing I could imagine, that did not bring back my apprehensions and anticipations as to the precariousness of my tenure here—still my delight at having Merman decidedly expelled and properly exposed, got the better—at least for two hours—of every other feeling.

But the storm I had to encounter in the interval between my interview with Wells, letter in

hand from Merman himself, and this explanatory one, was something terrific. Harriet was so well satisfied with Jane's conduct, and the resolution at which she had arrived as to going to Sniggs's, that she endured—nay, perhaps that is too strong a term—she was pleased with her society, and remained with her, until Kate's return from the love market, and from visiting the remains of her dear brother.

She came home accompanied by Mrs. Sniggs, who, not venturing to intrude farther than the hall, left her there, having imprinted on her damask cheek a kiss, accompanied by a promise that Mr. Sniggs would be up in the morning, and that any suggestion she might make would be, of course, attended to.

There was a crisis at hand. Kate's return was followed by a summons from her to Jane to attend her in *her* room. Jane, gaining strength against tyranny by encouragement from Harriet, whose manner assured and engaged her, sent word by the maid that she was with Mrs. Gurney, and that she might come to *her* (having obtained

permission), or she must wait till she could leave her aunt.

This answer to her message set Kitty into a flame. She, the possessor of the order from head-quarters ; she who had, under the protection of Mrs. Sniggs, defied the power of her aunt, to be treated in this disrespectful and unceremonious manner ! Lucky indeed was it for her maid that she was somewhat older, larger, and stronger than Kitty, else, in the paroxysm which followed the message, she would, in all probability, have fallen a victim to her excessive rage.

“ La ! Miss,” said the maid, “ why do you put yourself in a passion about people like these ? why what are they ?—only charity children of dear Mr. Cuthbert, your dear father ; don’t let them see that you care about them. I’m sure, after their treatment of poor Master Thomas, they deserve neither notice nor respect. If I was you, Miss Katherine, I would go straight, right an end, to Mrs. Gurney’s room, and walk in without so much as knocking at the door or saying with your leave or by your leave, and I should

just tell them all about your visit to your dear brother's venerable remains, and describe it to them ; tell them how he looked, and what a place he is in, and all that, and make them cry their nasty hearts out; and as for Miss Jane, she ought to be ashamed of going and carneying over these people, who want to rob her and you of your rightful fortune."

This conversation, or rather this harangue, with all of which I accidentally became acquainted, had the desired effect, and stirred Miss Katherine up to the execution of her maid's design and accordingly, with Cuthbert's letter in her hand, and without—according to prescription—any knocking or tapping at the door, she flounced into Harriet's room. Luckily, as it happened, I was on my road thither too, and almost immediately followed the sylph-like *danseuse* into the apartment.

" So, Jane," said Kate, without even affecting the civility of first noticing my wife, " you do not choose to come to my room to hear what I have to tell you—you have no feeling—no heart,

Jenny—and so I shall write and tell Pappy—I—have—seen—Tommy;” and thereupon she burst into tears.

“ I know you have,” said Jane; “ you went out on purpose.”

“ I—never—saw—anybody dead before,” sobbed Kate; “ but I am glad I went,” and here she cried exceedingly.

“ Kitty,” said Harriet, rising from her seat and taking her hand in her hands, “ my dear girl, you should not cry in this manner. What avails all this sorrow?—he is gone to a better world; indeed if you had consulted *me*, I should have strongly urged the uselessness of such a visit—I might almost add, the danger.”

I felt a slight shudder at the thought—my poor baby unconsciously sleeping within three yards of the excited young lady.

“ I don’t care for danger,” said Kate, “ and as for asking *you*, aunt, I knew you would not have let me go, and so did Mrs. Brandyball, and that was the reason she confided the whole arrangement to Mrs. Sniggs, who is such a very nice woman.”

"Kitty," said Harriet, "whatever opinion Mrs. Brandyball may form of strangers, not only to herself but to us, I must be permitted to think that we, who are the nearest connexions you have in England, and who can have no interest separate from yours, are quite as likely to advise for the best as Mrs. Sniggs."

"Yes," said Kate, "that is quite true, but then you say you are not able to be out and about shopping."

"No," said Harriet, "nor should I be out and about shopping, while your brother lay unburied, even if I were otherwise well enough to undertake the fatigue."

"Ah, well," said Kate, with an air of independence more impertinent than any thing I had yet seen, "that's as *you* think—of course I am not so old as you are, and don't know so much; but I am older than Jane, and when I order her to do anything, good-natured as I am to her in general, I expect it to be done."

"Not," said I, "if what you ask is contrary to her feelings and principles."

"I don't know," said Kate, "about prin-

ciples; but I know that when Tom was alive I didn't care more for him than she did; but now that he is dead and all that, I wished to go and see him in his coffin—not only because he was my brother, but because I knew it would please Pappy."

I wish any indifferent person had been present to have seen the expression of my poor Harriet's countenance at the end of this pretty speech.

"However, I *have* been," said Kate, "and have done what is right, and have bought what I wanted at the shop; and now I shan't want to go out any more till the funeral."

"You continue," said I, "in the same mind about going to the funeral, Kitty?"

"Of course I do," said Kate. "Pappy wishes it; and Mr. Sniggs, when he comes here,—either this afternoon or to-morrow, I forget which.—(He said he would come when he could,)—will tell you that it is the express desire of Pappy that we should go."

"Pray, Kitty," said I, "didn't my brother send any note or letter to me? You havn't forgotten or mislaid any parcel?"

"O no," said Kate; "Pappy said that as poor Tom was turned out of the house, and died at the Doctor's, you of course cared nothing about it; and he is so much obliged to the Sniggses, that I believe he only meant us to come here because the Sniggses have no room in their house for us."

"No, Kate," said Jane, "I don't think Pappy meant that: he said, as long as Ashmead belonged to Uncle Gilbert we might as well have the use of it."

"Ah, well," said Kitty, "it was something of that sort, I know."

Here slipped out unintentionally a pretty sort of allusion to my occupancy, which did not escape the notice of Harriet, who, I believe, permitted this scene to be acted in her room, in order to catch the points as they fell.

"However," said Kate, "I am glad I went, for I have got the music part all settled."

"The what?" said Harriet.

"The music," said Kate. "Pappy was very anxious—so Mrs. Brandyball writes, at least—

that there should be some solemn music played upon the organ when poor Tom was brought in——”

“I know,” said Harriet, “I have heard that.”

“They do it abroad, don’t they?” said Jane, in perfect innocence.

“I don’t know, dear,” said Harriet. “Well, and,—”

“So as Mr. Sniggs told us,” said Kate, “in the morning, that Mr. Stopzanoff, the German, who is organist here, is gone to London, I got Mrs. Sniggs to call on Mr. Kittington, who plays upon all sorts of instruments, to ask him to do the dirge.”

“And was he at home?” said I.

“Yes,” said Kate “and he has promised to do it, out of respect to Pappy.”

“Miss Kitty,” said Harriet, firing with rage, and rising from her seat, “this is too bad!—I declare——”

“Harriet, my love,” said I, “pray, pray consider.”

CHAPTER VII.

I WAS just in time to save the explosion—Harriet's good sense came suddenly at my call to check the expression of her feelings; and, contenting herself with lifting up her eyes, and firmly closing her lips, she threw herself back in her chair, not, however, without Kate's perceiving that she was considerably excited, and that her forbearance was an effort: still, it was clear to me, from the manner in which she mentioned the dancing master's readiness to do the dirge, that she was not at all aware of the extent of my knowledge of her previous proceedings with regard to that person; and I

satisfied myself also that after Kittington's conduct about the letter, he would do nothing inconsistent with honour and propriety.

To have refused to do that, which Kate, as I imagined had, in Cuthbert's name, requested him to do, would have been impossible. His agreeing to play the organ—since, according to the young lady's version of the history, my ill-starred brother was so anxious about such a performance—was no indication of any change in his views and feelings as regarded herself, and the presence of Mrs. Sniggs would naturally have hindered any conversation—except, indeed, with “eloquent eyes”—between them, in the way of explanation, as to his not having answered her affectionate letter.

“Well, then,” said Kitty, apropos to nothing, “I shall go and take off my bonnet and things, and set my maid to work to make up my mourning. Come, Jane, I have had all the trouble of fetching you, so I desire you will do as I bid you.”

“My mourning is all ready,” said Jane, “and

I am reading to my Aunt ; when I have finished I will come."

" Well, I'm sure !" said Kitty, with a toss of her head that would have suited Gay's Lucy ; " see if I don't tell Pappy how very rudely you behave to me."

And away she went. As she closed the door sharply, Jane's eyes rested on Harriet's face, and a sympathetic expression of feeling animated both their countenances, which I did not regret to see. I begin to like Jane—nay I this very day called her Jenny, and the adoption of what Entick oddly enough calls the *abbreviation* of the word Jane into Jenny, and Ann into Nancy, convinced me, almost unconsciously, that affection is taking place of formality.

Two events rapidly succeeded this scene, for one of which only I was altogether unprepared ; for although it might seem that I had had no very favourable opportunity of making myself well acquainted with the world's ways, I had a sort of intuitive perception into character, and fancied that I should not often be deceived into

a miscalculation of the real qualities of those with whom I came in contact.

The former of the two events was the arrival of Mr. Sniggs, clad in a suit of sables, which shone like sticking-plaster—his shirt cuffs doing duty as weepers, and his hat nearly covered with crape.

“Good morning, Sir,” said Galen: “I haven’t been able to get to you before—a good deal of sickness flying about—hope all’s well here?”

“Yes,” said I, “we ought to be very grateful.”

“I suppose,” said Sniggs, “that Miss Falwasser has informed you of your kind, generous brother’s solicitous anxiety to pay every respect to the memory of the dear departed—I think all the arrangements are now nearly complete.”

“Miss Falwasser,” said I, “has not been particularly communicative upon the point; nor did it seem necessary that she should be so, since my brother has confided his daughters-in-law, *pro hac vice* at least, to Mrs. Sniggs.”

"Ah, there it is," said Sniggs, "I knew it—I told Mrs. S. I said, 'Depend upon it, Mrs. S., they will be miffed, up at Ashmead, at your interference.' However, my dear Sir, what could we do?—there was the letter—the kind and generous letter—of that most excellent brother of yours; and of course we could not remonstrate with him upon the point."

"There was not the least occasion for your doing so," said I; "Cuthbert has every right to please himself; and, I assure you, I think the details which have been entrusted to you and Mrs. Sniggs are not of a nature to gratify any persons to whom they are confided."

"I believe," said Sniggs, "that Mr. Cuthbert intends asking Mr. Wells to give a funeral sermon next Sunday, to which I conclude he will not object. The subject is so moving—so touching—the early flower nipped in its bud—the instability of earthly vanities—the——"

"Has Cuthbert written to the Rector?" said I.

"I don't know," replied Sniggs, "but I

know Mrs. Brandyball told me she should do so."

The conversation which had passed between that estimable lady and my vivacious father-in-law on the evening when she described the merits of Montpelier, and the impression it had made upon his mind, flashed into my memory as my medical friend talked of a correspondence between them upon such a subject as this.

"But," said Sniggs, raising his eyebrows into an arch of interesting inquisitiveness, "perhaps if she should omit to do so—*you would*—"

"Oh dear no!" said I; "I could not think of interfering in any of the proceedings."

"Oh! I see," said Sniggs; "only, as you have been good enough to request Mr. Kittington to supply the place of Dr. Stopzanpoff at the organ during the funeral ceremony, I thought perhaps you might extend your kindness a little farther."

Now came a puzzler. It was clear that Miss

Kitty had used *my* name in making the request to Mr. Kittington, and it was equally clear that he must think me the most extraordinary of all human beings, after what had occurred between us, to send that volatile young lady on a commission to his house, even under the protection of so respectable a chaperone as Mrs. Sniggs. The question was—and it was to be decided on the instant—should I repel the insinuation, and, by declaring the truth, proclaim Miss Kitty Falwasser that which I knew her to be? or, by slurring over the affair in its present stage, content myself with disabusing the mind of the dancing-master at the first favourable opportunity? If I took the former course, “war to the knife” would soon be the cry from the Cuthbert party, and my reasons for positively denying the fact, and for Kate’s taking upon herself to use my name, would necessarily be required; and then adieu to all further concealment of any of the other circumstances of the case. If I adopted the latter, I might in another hour vindicate myself to Mr. Kittington, at the sacrifice, cer-

tainly, of Kate's reputation for veracity ; but as the young lady herself had thought proper long since to let Mr. Kittington into some of the peculiarities of her disposition and character, not altogether disconnected from dissimulation, nor much more venial than a plain straightforward falsehood ; and as I felt I was safe with *him*, I resolved upon merely listening to the further disclosures of my medical friend, without saying yea or nay upon this last curious and surprising point of the young lady's conduct.

"I have fixed ten o'clock for the funeral," said Sniggs ; "I will send a mourning-coach up here at a quarter before. The young ladies, I presume, adhere to their original intention of attending the mournful ceremony ?"

"Really," said I, "I cannot answer that question, for Miss Kate does not admit me to her confidence. I *have* an opinion on the subject, but I suppose if Cuthbert wishes it, he is to be considered omnipotent."

“ It will be an affecting sight,” said Sniggs, looking pathetic—“ the two sisters following their brother’s body; don’t you think so? It will show that whatever people may say, he was not really neglected.”

“ Say?” exclaimed I; “ what! do people say anything about it?”

“ Why,” said Sniggs—“ no—not much—but folks *will* talk—and some of the gossips think it hard that the poor boy should have been removed from the care of his immediate relations to——”

“ Mr. Sniggs,” said I, interrupting the unamiable leech, “ he was removed from this house, from which his only two immediate relations were (by Cuthbert’s own orders, also, removed) to yours; a proof of the confidence which was placed in you by my brother and myself—a proof which I really should have thought might have been flattering to you in a particular degree. It is true the poor boy died—here he might have lived—that was not to be foreseen; in *this* house cherry-brandy is not left in the

unlocked cupboards of sick boys' bed-rooms to be swallowed at pleasure."

I had said—I, who passed my whole life in restraining the animation of Harriet upon all such points, had, as her maid Foxcroft would have said, "outed with it." The words were past recall. Sniggs knew my mind—he stood aghast—I saw my advantage, and, with the rapidity of a prize-fighter, followed it up, and before the apothecary could recover his "wind," added, "And that fact I shall take care to let my poor deluded brother know, in order that he may judge how wisely he has disposed of his confidence."

Sniggs turned pale, whether with rage or apprehension I know not; but he was evidently summoning all the energies of his mind to form a reply, when a servant entered the room and told me that Captain Thompson, who was living at Chittagong Lodge, was in the morning-room, and wished to see me—about what, I knew not, never having seen *him* in my life, except at church, with his two nieces, or sisters, as they

were sometimes called, and a cousin or two, whose complexions seemed to combine the beauties of the lily and the rose, in a manner little calculated to excite any great admiration of Nature's special bounty, and who were very much looked at in the parish, without being much looked upon.

I desired the servant to say I was engaged at the moment, but would wait upon the Captain in a few minutes.

This little interruption seemed to cool my Galen, and give him time to consider his reply to my somewhat abrupt insinuation; it had, however, the effect of moderating the ire which, presuming upon Cuthbert's credulity as to his merits, and ignorance as to his faults, he seemed at first very much inclined to exhibit.

“ Why, Sir,” said he, “ I admit”—and he appeared to be truly affected, and I began to be proportionably sorry for my abruptness—“ I—admit that the affair of the cherry-bounce was a misfortune—it was, I also admit, not calculated upon; but I have the satisfaction, and a very

pleasurable feeling it is, to know that the poor boy must have died under the influence of the disease, whether he had drunk the cherry-brandy or not."

"And therefore," said I, "he would have died here, as surely as he did die at your house?"

"Unquestionably," said Sniggs; "he had precisely the same medicines, diet, and medical attendance *there* as he would have had *here*."

I thought the reasoning of my unconscious friend, as to the certainty of his dissolution, under the circumstances, and under his care, conclusive, not to speak of the satisfaction which he appeared to derive from the conviction.

"Then," said I, "that being the case, why talk of the idle gossipings of the people here, which, if they have any effect at all, must tell to your disadvantage, and not mine?"

"I do *not* talk of them," said Sniggs, evidently disconcerted, "as a matter of my own opinion—only—I know that Mr. Cuthbert feels——"

“ — He does not feel, Mr. Sniggs,” said I; “ he is a mere automaton in the hands of other people. Cuthbert advised the boy’s removal—fled from him himself—carried off the boy’s sisters—and, with all this show of devotion to his memory, does not think of coming here, because Mrs. Brandyball thinks it likely to conduce more to the success of her designs upon him to be left alone with him at Bath; for which reasons—and others which I will not mention—the poor girls are sent here to parade themselves in what I, and everybody else, must consider a most unseemly and unbecoming position. Now, there’s *my* opinion, and you have it, and are quite at liberty to communicate it to my brother.”

“ Why,” said Sniggs, rather startled by the unexpected earnestness of my manner, “ I—really—to say truth—I do not know whether you have had any communication on the point, but I believe the attendance of the young ladies sprang from the genuine feelings of Miss Kitty herself.”

“Genuine nonsense!” said I; “I want to know nothing about the matter. I shall be ready, when the carriage comes to take me to your house and thence to the funeral; but as I feel bound by no ties of relationship to the poor boy who is gone, and by very slender ties of connexion, I should do a violence to my candour, and the sense of what is due to myself, if I were to affect a depth of grief,—which, if Miss Falwasser’s sincerity were equally to be questioned, I doubt she does not in the least understand. My brother, as I have already said, has confided to you and your lady all these arrangements, and I am quite ready to obey your orders, delighted to be relieved from a responsibility which, at all times, is critical and embarrassing, and which, upon this occasion, would assuredly induce me to set my face most decidedly against a proceeding as unusual as it seems preposterous: however, I have, as you know, a gentleman waiting, and must take my leave. I shall be ready when the coach comes, and of course, if the young ladies continue in the mind—and

Mrs. Sniggs does not object—they will be my companions. And so good morning."

Saying which, I bowed myself out of the room, and went down stairs to receive my new and unexpected visitor, leaving Mr. Sniggs in a state to which I certainly, in the beginning of our conversation, had not the remotest idea of reducing him.

Upon entering the morning-room, I found Captain Thompson pacing the apartment, looking somewhat pale and agitated, bearing in his hand a moderately sized horsewhip ; with which he seemed to be practising some ungentle manœuvre, relative to the back and shoulders of some imaginary antagonist.—I hesitated, and said—

" Captain Thompson, I believe."

" Exactly so, Sir," said my guest ; " I ought to apologize for coming here while your windows are shut, and there's a family corpse unburied, Sir,—but a man cannot bear more than he can —that I suppose you will admit?"

The assertion seemed incontrovertible—so I bowed assent.

“ Well, Sir,” said the Captain, “ I am a plain man.”

Another truism to which I tacitly agreed.

“ And mean no harm.”

That, I thought to myself, is by no means so clear—still I bowed.

“ But as you are, I dare say, aware I have been for some months tenant of that beautiful mansion which your uncle, Mr. Nubley, thinks proper to call Chittagong Lodge—”

“ Not my uncle, Sir,” said I. “ Mr. Nubley’s connexion with *me* arises simply from his having been a partner of an elder brother of mine in India.”

“ Oh,” said Thompson, “ he is not a relation of yours ?”

“ Not in the most distant degree,” said I.

“ Why then,” said Thompson, “ that alters the case, and I may ask you a question without giving any personal offence, or casting any per-

sonal stigma upon the hereditary qualities of the family?"

" You may ask what question you please," said I.

" Well, then, Sir," said Thompson, shouldering the whip, " is that old gentleman mad?"

" I never heard such a thing even suggested," said I.

" Then, Sir, how do you account for his conduct?" said Thompson, giving his whip a sort of horizontal shake. " What do you think he did this morning?—I came here, Sir," added the Captain, " with great pain at such a moment as this—but a soldier is jealous of his honour, and I could not rest. After walking round and round the fences and palings of the place with his lady for the last two or three days, this morning, in he stalks into the house, and although I received him with all the urbanity of which I am master; and although my nieces Evelina, and Rosetta, and my cousin Madelina, did everything they possibly could do to make Mrs. Nubley's reception in her own house

agreeable, he began in the most extraordinary manner to abuse *me* and my relations, mixing up all this with the greatest possible civility.

“ ‘ Captain Thompson,’ said he, ‘ I am glad to see you—the grounds look very pretty—infernally swindler pays no rent—anxious about the place—paper in drawing-room all smeared—vulgar dog—look at the carpet—if it is quite convenient to give me possession at Lady-day, instead of Midsummer, should feel obliged, as I have been disappointed in a house—that’s fudge—anything to get the fellow away’—but, Sir, this was a trifle. I presented him to the young ladies—and after complimenting Evelina on her beautiful complexion, for which she is really celebrated, he said, staring her full in the face, ‘ The roses are rouge, and the lilies pearl-powder,—tol-der-a-lol.’ I bore even this with patience, but when my cousin Madelina, as fine a young woman as ever stepped, and as good too, playfully opened the door of the second drawing-room to show him how careful we had been of the furniture, he said, ‘ Thank ye, Miss,

thank ye ;' and, staring her full in the face, added, ' no better than she should be I take it.' Now really, Sir, I only ask what course can I pursue under these circumstances ? I saw none open, but coming here directly, believing, moreover, that he was a relation of yours —as he is not, I feel that I ought to apologise, still farther, for my intrusion, and say no more, except to ask again whether he is or is not insane, as upon the answer I receive, the conduct which I shall observe towards him must mainly depend."

" Not he, Sir," said I. " I believe him to be perfectly in his senses: he is very odd I admit, and has a propensity to talk to himself, which, to a stranger, renders his conversation very perplexing."

" Why, Sir," said Captain Thompson, giving the horsewhip a slight flourish, " if his talking were merely talking to himself, nobody else could reasonably be offended, because a man may amuse himself as much as he pleases; and I have no doubt if Mr. Nubley did so, he would find plenty

of persons to agree with him ; but when he stares one in the face, and says the things that he said of me and my relations, why, really,—I—” —and here again the horsewhip waggled a good deal.

“ It is,” said I, “ purely constitutional—a habit of thinking aloud, which has grown in old age upon a naturally absent man, and while he is conversing in the ordinary worldly course of conversation, he becomes abstracted, and the truth comes out most unintentionally.”

“ The truth comes out, does it, Sir ?” said Captain Thompson, looking at me with a most ferocious expression of countenance ; the horsewhip suddenly rising to something more than an angle of forty five,—“ the truth comes out, does it—eh ?”

“ Yes, the ingenuousness of the mind develops itself,” said I.

“ Oh,” said Thompson, considerably excited, “ the ingenuousness of the mind develops itself, does it ?—what, then Sir, it was in the sincerity of his heart that Mr. Nubley called me

an infernal swindler, and a vulgar dog—that he said Evelina's complexion was made up of rouge and pearl-powder, and informed Madelina that she was no better than she should be—that is ingenuousness, is it, Sir?—and that is *your* mode of justifying your uncle's conduct?"

"Sir," said I, "Mr. Nubley is *not* my uncle. I have before told you so."

"Well, Sir," said Thompson, "at all events, you are his friend, and evidently justify his otherwise unjustifiable conduct.—I am quite aware, Sir, that Mr. Gurney, and what are called the leaders of Blissfold society, have thought proper to behave in a most extraordinary manner to my nieces and my cousin, and I only wanted an opportunity of ascertaining the reason why gentlewomen of family and rank—yes, Sir," added Thompson, with a flourish of the whip that made it whistle in the wind,—"of rank—have been so shamefully used.—I have now discovered it, Sir,—the sweet ingenuousness of this old gentleman has settled that affair, and since you have been so good as to palliate his coarse-

ness, I shall take the liberty of transferring the necessity of an explanation to yourself. Having," added the Captain, "established this fact, I would not for the world intrude another moment upon you at this juncture, and I have again to apologise for taking the liberty I have taken at this season. But, as I before stated, I wished to ascertain whether I were to attribute the grossnesses which fell from your uncle's lips——"

"Sir," said I, "he is *not* my uncle."

"Well, Sir," continued the irritated Thompson, "it is all the same to me whether he is or is not. I say, I wished to know whether I were to attribute the grossnesses which fell this morning from that old man's lips—for gentleman I will not call him—to insanity, or premeditation? You have satisfied me on that point. Not only do you state that he is sane when speaking these offensive words—but that they are the fruits of his ingenuousness.—I have done, Sir——"

So much the better, thought I——

——"for the present. After the funeral and a

decent period has elapsed, I shall take the liberty to send a friend to you, in order to settle our little difference!"

"Difference, Sir!" said I, "I really am not aware——"

"My friend will enlighten you, Sir," said Thompson. "You have shifted—very honourably, I admit—the responsibility from the shoulders of the old man on to your own. You must see that your explanation of the nature of his infirmity is a mere confirmation of the pre-meditated insult inflicted by him upon myself and my nearest female relations. It is, I repeat, extremely fair and handsome of you, and I shall, of course, avail myself of the earliest opportunity of setting myself right. Mr. Nubley is now safe from any personal hostility on my part, and I beg leave to bid you a very good morning."

As he proceeded towards the door, I rang the bell, and as he crossed the hall, he observed, with a degree of careless indifference, and as if his visit had been one of the most agreeable—

" very fine weather for the time of year, Mr. Gurney—pray don't come any farther—good morning".—And so—exit Thompson.

I retired to my room perfectly bewildered with the brief scene which had just been enacted. The departure of this "best of cut-throats" gave me an opportunity of inquiring of poor dear Nubley what had really occurred; of which, however, Thompson's description gave, no doubt, a tolerably correct idea. As far as I was concerned, it was clear that a personal quarrel was fastened upon me, and that Thompson, like all the disreputable persons who are subjected to the operation of the laws and customs of good society, had long been anxious to hit some blot which might enable him to make a stir, the result of which should be to establish himself on a *locus standi*, either to be admitted with all his tribe into the circle with which they desired to mix, or to prove, by some act of violence, his readiness to make those persons pay the penalty of their fastidiousness, who had thought fit to exclude them from it.

This, although a new evil amongst the many which combined to oppress me, did not promise to be immediate in its effect—on the contrary, two or three days would at least elapse, before, according to the man's own notion of etiquette and decency, he could “send his friend to me”—a period which I honestly confess, I flattered myself might be successfully employed in averting a hostile meeting arising out of no earthly offence of mine—unless, indeed, an inadvertent expression touching the innocent murmurings of my *pseudo* uncle could be so considered. I do not think I am more nervous than my neighbours, but I was now married and had a son, and the cares of the world were upon me, and I admit that as the Captain and his horsewhip left the house, I felt a twinge in that part of my leg in which I had shot myself in my affair with Daly.

Well—never mind—the proverb says that Providence gives meat for the mouths that are made; and, upon a similar principle, I believe Providence affords us proportionate strength and courage to meet a growing accumulation of ill.

I would not give sixpence for a mind that is not elastic—let it delight in the minutest pleasure—let it expand to bear the greatest evil. I am a small person, but I thank my stars that I am so constituted, and, like poor Daly, can suit myself to all sorts of weather—ride over the wave—stoop to it—and rise again—without, however, stooping in any other sense of the word.—I will dismiss this Thompson from my mind until he sends his emissary; so no more of this.

But what a girl is this Kitty!—what am I to do about *that*?—If Thompson makes me a *particeps criminis* with Nubley, what must the dancing-master think of my decency or consistency in the other affair?—I appreciate his conduct towards the little monkey who assails him—I praise it—I shake hands with him—thank him—and the next thing he finds me doing, according to *her* version, is sending her to his house to ask a favour in *my* name, under the protection of a person who has nothing on earth to do with us.—I *must* see him—I *must* again explain.

Then here is Wells, my poor dear father-in-law, as vivacious as ever, in high dudgeon about

the Lieutenant, and Fanny in as towering a rage as ever excited rural beauty—*her* I have sent up to Harriet—her father I must commune with; but in the mean time what shall I do about Kittington?

“ Well, Sir,” said I to the Rector, “ has Fanny made up her mind to this business?”

“ Oh dear, yes,” said Wells; “ I train my girls to like those I like, and to reject those I turn off. *My* notion is, that my young ladies are merely passive, and will do as I bid them.”

“ Well!” thought I, “ this is pleasant: talk of Nubley’s absence of mind offending Captain Thompson! here is the intelligent Rector propounding a doctrine of passive obedience, which, if I were tetchy or tenacious, would make me sceptical even of the devotion of my own unsophisticated wife.”

“ We are all creatures of habit,” said Wells:—“ six months settles it:—marriage is like a stage-coach—when first you start, there may be a few little differences and angularities—if there be such a word:—a little shaking on the journey

soon sets all that to rights, and everything settles down harmoniously. I don't know that Fanny cared much for the Lieutenant, but she liked him enough to marry him if I wished it, and they sat and flirted, and whispered, and talked a parcel of nonsense about themselves, and made themselves vastly ridiculous; and, if he had behaved as he ought to have done, I have no doubt they would have made a very comfortable couple, but as he has *cut and run*, Fanny has too much sense to care about him any more, and he will be married to Miss Malony or Maloony, or whatever her name is, and there an end."

All this was very harsh and grating to my ear, because I never could forget how nearly parallel our cases were.

"What's this?" said Wells, changing the subject, as I thought considerately, if not prudentially,—"what's this I hear about a funeral sermon to be preached upon the gunpowder Tom? Mrs. Sniggs has been at the Rectory talking some nonsense to Mrs. Wells, upon whom she

has foisted herself only upon this pretence.—I shall preach no funeral sermon, unless you wish it; and as to a dirge, I declare till the woman told my wife that it was meant in earnest, I thought it was a joke of Sniggs's."

Wells, as I have already recorded, had found out a great deal more upon the subject of the dancing-master than I had ever intended to escape from the sanctum of Ashmead, but as I had decided upon the course I should take with regard to the piece of underhanded tom-foolery now on the *tapis*, I allowed him to anathematise duly, and in the most orthodox manner, all manner and kinds of persons who should attempt to desecrate the parish church of Blissfold by such an unseemly melody—quite aware that, after a brief communication with Mr. Kittington, the dreadful sacrilege would most assuredly not be committed.

I was not disappointed in my expectations of Mr. Kittington—in less than half an hour after the termination of my dialogue with Wells, I received a note from him couched in the most

gentlemanly and respectful terms ; in which, after apologising for taking the liberty of troubling me with such an appeal, he expressed, most reluctantly, as he admitted, a disbelief that I had made the extraordinary application about his performance at the church, or that I had been a party to Miss Falwasser's visit to his mother's house after the very peculiar conversation which had previously passed between us.—This was exactly what I anticipated and what I wished—and I answered his note by telling him that I would call upon him at eight o'clock in the evening, a time at which I could easily walk down to the village—(I beg pardon, Town)—without observation, and express to him personally, much better than in writing, the real state of the case—for although Kate deserved no great forbearance at *my* hands or those of Harriet, still I did not like to put upon record, even in a note which I felt sure would never see the light,—the duplicity and dexterity of one so young, so artful, and deceptive.

When Mr. and Mrs. Nubley—who, bating

their drapery, reminded me mightily of Adam and Eve before the fall,—came mooning unto the house—thanks to Miss Kate Falwasser for the phrase—I ventured to take the dear original aside and ask him where he had been during the early part of the day?

“ Why,” said Nubley—“ we have been—eh—been—to Chittagong—over the grounds—into the house—brute of a man that Thompson—eh?”

“ Yes,” said I, “ but you need not have told him so, my dear Sir.”

“ Me !” said Nubley, stubbling his chin—“ I tell him so ! La, bless you—not I—no—we were the greatest possible friends—odd girls the nieces and cousin !—he ! he ! he !”—and then in an under-tone, “ *what makes him look so glum, I wonder ?* ”

“ Why, my dear Sir,” said I, “ Captain Thompson has been here to look after you—and failing of finding *you*, has fastened all your faults upon me—he says you abused him and the whole family.”

"That's a fib, Gilbert," said Nubley—"I praised them, every one of them—beasts as they are—no—I said nothing offensive I know. Mrs. N. said something about them, I forget what—which seemed to vex one of them—but I—la! —I praised them, I tell you—eh?—*I wonder what Gilbert is at now?*"

This last surmise was expressed in a tone nearly as loud as all his previous protestations of politeness to the Thompsons.

"Why," said I, "my dear Sir, I do not think you are aware of the only failing I can discover in your character,—I mean that of thinking aloud——"

"Ah!" said Nubley,—"talking to myself what I think?—that's it.—I believe I do—my wife has not that failing.—Poor thing! she talks to everybody else and never thinks at all—I hope she does not hear me—eh?—as for that Thompson, he is—between ourselves—no better than he should be—umph—few of us are."

"Those, as I understood," said I, "were

precisely the words you used to one of the young ladies."

"Ah!" said Nubley—"I thought—I know I *thought* so—very strange—eh? Chi—chi—he does not know what that means."

Whether I did or did not comprehend these two very significant monosyllables, I found it was no manner of use endeavouring to persuade Nubley that this principle of wearing a window in his breast was not altogether safe in the world, and therefore I pooh pooh'd off his inquiry as to the nature of the visit of Thompson to Ashmead, resolving to do my duty by Cuthbert's venerable and unsophisticated partner, should it eventually be considered necessary to carry the matter into the field.

Then came dinner—and, to my delight, Harriet, for the first time since her confinement, took her place at the table—and she looked so nice and so pretty, that I could not help casting my eyes upon Wells and Fanny, who dined with us, and saying to myself, "Well, I don't care upon what principle you marry your daughters. If

all of them turn out like the one I have secured to myself, the system will do no harm to anybody”—and then I felt a kind of chuckling satisfaction that Merman was not to have Fanny as a wife--and then I drank a glass of wine with Harriet—and she looked placid and pleased—and Kate seemed a little subdued—and Jane began, as I thought, to look quite pretty.

The ladies retired, and in order to fulfil my promised engagement to Mr. Kittington, I begged my reverend father-in-law, if I should be detained beyond “coffee time,” to take charge of the fair flock and give them the advantages of his society till I should return—and in the mean while to be kind enough to exert his influence over Kate to abandon her intention of attending the funeral—Jane having already more than half agreed that it would be infinitely more agreeable to her feelings to abstain from a show of grief very unusual, and not at all in accordance with her own notions of real sorrow for the loss of so near a relation.

Away I went—and as what occurred during my interview with Mr. Kittington will transpire in my notes of the conversation which took place on my return to Ashmead—the particulars may be spared here: suffice it to say—I saw him—conversed with him—explained my conduct in the affair—was perfectly satisfied with his, and came home.

I confess I was very much struck by the appearance of his humble residence—and of his family, which consisted only of a mother and sister. I had never crossed his threshold before, nor had I ever seen his relations except at church. I was ushered into a small but pretty parlour—the modest decorations of which gave indications of a taste and feeling suited to a more spacious apartment. Books were disposed in all available corners; drawings by good masters, not numerous but well-chosen, hung against the walls; an evidently much-frequented pianoforte stood opposite the fire-place; a pert canary-bird hopped from perch to perch in its gilded cage; and a spaniel of the pure Marlborough breed

extended its breadth on the rug before the fire.

The little family had just finished their tea—that curious bond of middling society, the enchanting charm of which is unknown to what is called “the world;” and which I myself confess I feel some difficulty in appreciating as I ought to do—Kittington was reading aloud one of those extraordinary novels about which the whole nation is at this period raving, and of the origin or authority of which we are totally ignorant. His mother was occupied in working, and his pretty sister sedulously employed in copying music into a gaily decorated book of “her own,” a delicate act of piracy extremely popular even in the best circles.

Best circles! what am I talking of? The scene I witnessed in this industrious artist’s cottage filled me with pleasure and respect—here I beheld, retired from the toils of his inglorious profession, the dutiful son and affectionate brother—enjoying the society of those whom he loved and for whom he laboured in

his vocation.—What station in life could afford more happiness?—wealth and rank would have made these people richer—greater; but look round the world and see, after all, how very slight the shades of difference really are which exist in the comforts and happiness of the various classes of what may be called general society! An elderly Duchess—the owner of a palace with sixteen gilded rooms *en suite*,—to be snug and comfortable in a winter's night like this, would huddle into her boudoir at the extreme end of those sixteen rooms, ensconce herself in her easiest of chairs by her bright fire-side, with her pet dog at her feet. Having done so, what could her Grace do more agreeable than sit and listen to the reading of the new Scotch novels, while Lady Eliza Something took the opportunity of copying out some delicious “yoodles” (I dont know if that is the correct orthography) which dear Lady Mary Something else had just lent her. The pursuits of the two parties might most naturally be the same. I question whether in the enjoyment of the relaxation afforded after

active employment the dancing-master's family would not beat the Duchesses.

Be that as it may—I admit I was forcibly prepossessed in favour of my host and his relations by my visit to their Goshen. Kittington seemed anxious that his mother and sister should leave us alone in the snuggery—but this I would not hear of;—and so he and I retired to an equally neat little dining-parlour on the other side the passage—hall, I must not—with all my prepossessions—call it; into which he ushered me with an apology for the absence of a fire.

Our conversation was not long—but it confirmed all my suspicions as to Miss Falwasser—she had mentioned *my* name as the person anxious for the solemn music, and added an invitation to Kittington—whom she was sure I should be anxious to see at Ashmead in order to express my personal thanks for his attention to my wishes.

The course of proceeding upon which we resolved will presently appear, and I took my leave,

requesting permission to make my *adieu*x to the old lady and her daughter, whom I felt perfectly convinced had been kept by their honourable high-minded relation in perfect ignorance of Kitty's "juvenile indiscretions." I esteem this family, and will show that I do, if ever the opportunity occurs; although I admit that their own domestic affection and respectability are calculated in some degree to decrease my estimate of the son's forbearance with regard to Miss Falwasser, whose manners and qualifications, even if more matured, could have but little attraction to a young man accustomed to a tranquillity and comfort which she, poor wild child, could neither understand nor enjoy.

When I arrived at home I found Wells in the drawing-room acting upon my request, arguing seriously with Kate on the injudiciousness of subjecting herself to a public exhibition of sorrow at her brother's funeral; but I found his eloquence had been exercised in vain; she was crying, and answering his argument by merely

reiterating the words “dear Tom”—“dear pappy,”—“dear boy,”—“what shall I do?”—“I *will* go,”—“I will see the last of him.”—This was clearly a resolution borrowed in words from her maid—it is the commonest possible expression with such people, and equals in popularity that very remarkable answer given by persons in a certain station of life to an enquiry after any person who happens to have “shuffled off this mortal coil,”—“La ! bless you, Sir, they say he has been dead and buried these seven years :”—the necessity of this second portion of the information, after the establishment of the first, not being more obvious than another common asseveration of a man whose authority being in any degree doubted, assures you that “he saw whatever it may be with his own eyes,”—as how should he have seen it with those of any other person ?

As to the “dead and buried,” there certainly have been some strange exceptions: the celebrated Martin Van Butchell keeps his wife in his bed-chamber now, although she has been

long dead ; and I have the pleasure of the personal acquaintance of a very distinguished officer, whose lady having died in one of our colonies, and expressed a wish to be buried in England, was accordingly deposited in a cask of rum for the purpose of being transported home, but who remained in the cellar of the said distinguished officer even after his second marriage, the detention being occasioned by his expectation that the duty on the spirit imported into England, in which the dear departed was preserved, would in a few years be either lowered or taken off altogether ;—strange as this may seem, it is true¹.

Revenons à nos moutons.—“ What,” said I,—“ cannot the Rector succeed better than I in dissuading you from this sacrifice, Kitty ?”

“ No, Uncle, no,”—sobbed she,—“ let me go

¹ There is another instance on record of a similar delay in the interment of a lady, for which a reason relative to some sort of life insurance is given, which cannot, we presume, be correct; because, as we think, it could not be legal. The case to which we refer is that of Mrs. Hook, the wife of Major Hook, of Ham; which was stated in all the newspapers of the period at which the death of the Major occurred. ED.

—pray let me go.” Harriet, who remained up—bless her!—exhibited certain symptoms of disgust; and Jane, who it appeared had agreed to give up the point if Kate would do the same, clung to the knee of my wife as she sat on the foot-stool beside her.

“ Oh,” continued Kitty, “ everything reminds me of him—I could not rest—oh !”

This touch of the sentimental was particularly odious to me—knowing the genuine bent of her mind.

“ I have been this very day,” continued she, still sobbing, “ to look at the copper where the odious cannon knocked his dear little nose—poor boy !”

This was too much for Wells, who, after uttering—“ Umph !” jumped up from his chair and walked to the fire.

“ I see,” said the Rector, endeavouring to stifle a laugh at this last display, “ I have no chance of succeeding—so you must go.”

“ Ah !” said Kate, “ now I am happy—I never *was* at a funeral.” Harriet gave me a

look : the mixture of the sororial feeling with that of curiosity was food for an additional reflection upon Kate's character.

"I would not be absent for the world." This was given pathetically, and somewhat soliloquisingly.

"I find," said I, addressing myself to Wells, "we shall not have the music, after all."

"What!" cried Kate.

"Why?" said Wells.

"Mr. Kittington has told me," said I, "that he is unavoidably obliged to go to Winchester to-morrow early in the morning, and cannot be back till Saturday."

"Mr. Kittington going to Winchester!" said Kate.

I should like some eminent painter to have seen the expression of my wife's countenance when Kate asked that question.

"Yes," said I, "on business."

"How do you know, Uncle?" said Kate.

"Why," said I, "as you had told him I should feel obliged by his performance——"

Here Kate's white neck and bosom became rather reddish.

“—— He thought it necessary to let me know why he could not do as I wished.”

“ You wished ?” said Wells.

Redder still.

“ Yes,” said I ; “ as I wished, and as Kate told him I wished.”

“ Oh !” said Wells, “ I did not understand.”

Kate did, and gave me a look of gratitude for saving her from the exposure, which somewhat astounded me, and perfectly electrified my poor Harriet.

“ However,” I continued, “ as it is, that part of the ceremony must be dispensed with, and perhaps all for the best—I think, except upon important occasions, I mean occasions which interest other people besides those immediately connected with the deceased, all superfluous ceremonies are best avoided.”

“ Perhaps you are right, dear Uncle,” said Kate, in a tone which sufficiently expressed her

sense of my kindness in sparing her, "perhaps we had better not go."

"What!" said Harriet, who could not resist the gratification of giving her one hit; "you think a funeral without music must be exceedingly dull?"

"No, Aunt," said Kate; "but—I—"

"I know," said I, in order to put an end to what I feared would not otherwise end agreeably; "Kitty sees the good sense of the Rector's arguments."

"Yes, that's it, Uncle," said Kate, and brightening up from all the humidity of tears into a sunshine of eyes directed specially at Harriet, "and I shan't go. Jane may do as she likes."

"I never wished to go, dear," said Jane.

"Don't dear me, Miss Jane," replied Kate, every vestige of grief having disappeared from her countenance, which was now animated with anger. "You may do as you like; but I *do* think Mr. Kittington's conduct, considering how much he has been noticed here,

is extremely impudent — that I must say — and very unfeeling, and so I shall let Pappy know."

The curious telegraphing which went on after this impassioned speech convinced me that nobody present was out of the secret of what had passed between the young lady and the dancing-master, not even excepting Jane, as I fancied. The *roulade* of eyes was curious; mine, however, were principally fixed on Harriet's: I wanted to see how she bore this last *coup* of Miss Kitty's.

"But business," said I.

"What business," said Kate, in the most animated tone, "can be of sufficient importance to prevent his doing what *we* wished? I always thought he was a *spooney*."

This burst of unrequited love nearly set us all into what would have been a most unseemly roar of laughter on the eve of a family funeral, but upon *me*, I admit, it had the most ridiculous effect possible. The gradual transition from the deepest grief to the moderated sorrow, the

considerate feeling as to the attendance on the following morning, the defection of Kittington, his plea of business, and thence the violent conclusion at which she arrived, couched in the strongest terms, culled doubtless from the vocabulary of Montpelier, were very nearly too much for me: however, we all contrived not to take any particular notice of the climax of her speech, till Wells, with the most perfect gravity, and as if making no reference whatever to what had passed, said,

“I am glad, my dear Kitty, that you see the matter in its proper light, and give up attending the ceremony in the morning.”

“I would not go,” said Kate, “if you were to give me a hundred pounds: after Pappy’s civilities, and kindness, and after—but I don’t care—and I won’t talk about it. Jane may go if she likes, but I won’t.” And having burst into a flood of tears, in the production of which grief bore no part, the amiable girl literally rushed out of the room.

“Hadn’t I better go to her?” said Jane,

rising from the little footstool on which she was sitting.

“ As you please, Jane,” said Harriet.

And so Jane pleased to go ; but as great things invariably turn upon little ones, except, perhaps, in mechanics, I saw in a moment, by the use of the word “ *her* ” with a sort of peculiar but undefinable emphasis, that the sisters were “ two.” Jane had thought over the difference of treatment she experienced with us when she shared—at least—the affection of the family with Kitty, from that which she was destined to, at Montpelier, where Kitty was everything, and she nothing ; but what made both Harriet and myself uncomfortable upon this point—for we had talked it over *tête-à-tête*—was, the certainty of giving the direst offence to Cuthbert if we acceded to that which had become something more than an implied desire on the part of Jenny to remain at Ashmead when Kate returned to Bath.

I have often said, when I have passed through a country town which I never had seen before—

and many other people, I suppose, have said and thought the same—"Here is a place unknown to *me*, and to millions besides—a mere straggling row of houses, with two or three villas dotted round it—paltry, insignificant, and obscure ; but in this speck—this spot—this dot—rage all the passions, the turmoils, the jealousies, envies, and hatreds, by which the largest communities are agitated : but I confess I never, even in my most romantic musings upon the subject, calculated that I, an humble individual, placed—as, alas, I *was*—in quiet independence in the large village or small town, to which I was attracted and attached by my affection to Harriet, should have found the retired, unassuming Ashmead an arena for all the contentions which now characterised it. Cuthbert repelling me—Mrs. Brandyball intriguing against me—Kitty undermining me—Sniggs abandoning me—Nubley involving me in difficulties—Wells importuning me—Merman insulting him and outraging his daughter—Thompson threatening me—and Tom dead.

Why now, who upon earth that had not thought that such things might be, would, in driving past a modest white-fronted ‘Cottage of Gentility,’ as Southey says in his ‘Devil’s Walk,’ with little more than two bow windows and a door between, looking like a pair of lady’s stays stuck up for sale in a Bond-street shop window, fancy the turmoil and trouble that were in full fermentation within ! All interests are comparative, and all minds, as I have already said, ought to stretch to the objects which present themselves. A prime minister by habit thinks no more, probably, of ceding a great national question, declaring a war, or concluding a peace, than I thought of soothing Cuthbert, getting over the funeral of an unlicked cub, or coming to terms with Captain Thompson, the uncle of two elegant ladies and cousin of a third. But the same thing is going on everywhere ; and, in many instances —I mean no reflexions—the energies and talents which are exercised and exhibited in the contrivances of paltry provincial intrigues, would, upon

my favourite expanding principle, be found fully adequate to the conduct of matters which are considered of the highest importance.

I believe—I am yet young—but I believe that to make what is called a statesman, very little is required; to make a cabinet, still less. I have already said that I know little, and think little of polities; but it occurs to me, that any thirteen tolerably reasonable gentlemen of moderate understandings, might, with the assistance (each in his separate department) of experienced clerks well versed in details and routine, manage the government of this country as well as any other tolerably reasonable thirteen gentlemen who might be found; and, therefore, when I hear of a difficulty and delicacy on one side, in turning out the thirteen of the other side who happen to be what is called “in,” I wonder. A master spirit will lead the way and command; but, as for the rest—however, I must not dilate upon this;—here we have a Tory ministry in office, and, from all I can judge, are not likely to have any infliction of Whiggery for many

years to come. The name of Wellington grows upon us as fast as his titles blossom to the admiration of the country. If the fortune of war spare him, he will save our country ; and as I firmly believe in the fostering care of Providence in favour of England, I trust he *will* be saved for her sake. We had a Duke of Marlborough, who did great things after his fashion ; fought in fine weather, and rode about the field of battle, with a pair of kettle-drums at his heels, in a gilded chariot, now, as they say, to be seen in the Tower ; and when the weather became bad, walked into quarters for the winter. Lord Wellington takes it rather differently ; he beats the French instead of the drums, and the chances are, if he be preserved, that we shall see *him* a Duke too—the thing is not impossible. Where have I got to—prophesying ? Yes : but vainly, perhaps. All I meant to say was, that every house, every family, is in itself a little monarchy—and mark, what it *would* be if it were a little republic. Take Blissfold—multiply all the conflicting passions and feelings which now agitate

Ashmead by forty—say forty, the number, perhaps, of houses in which the same class of feelings may be supposed to exist in this parish—multiply those again by all the towns and villages in the British empire, and see what a combination of interests—incalculable, interminable—are at work !

Why, now, I, this very evening, have been to Kittington's. There is an under-current at work, as clear and as pure as the more sparkling tide above. That mother has her mind filled with solicitude for her worthy children. That son is, perhaps, although he laughed it off upon a former occasion, devoted to some amiable girl ; there may be difficulties in the way of their happiness. That auburn-haired sister of his, with one of the most intelligent countenances I ever beheld, might have been copying the air which most delighted her when some favourite voice sang the strain ; and yet I, living in the same place, had never seen that scene before. If I travel along a road of which I know nothing, I cannot help watching the smoke which, as Moore says,

“gracefully curls” from the chimney top of a house which I never have before beheld, and saying to myself—Round the fire which gives that vapour out, are now, perhaps, sitting a family whose simple history written down might interest the whole world.

It is needless to note what Harriet and I said about Kitty and Jane, and the abrupt refusal of the former to attend the funeral. I rejoiced in the result, although we knew perfectly well the cause to which it was attributable; but I certainly had a difficulty in keeping from my dear domestic wife, especially now that we were more together in what might be called confidentiality, the history of the Thompsonian visit, which remained to be settled. This was to me of no great moment, except as I feared that Nubley might, either consciously or unconsciously, let out the secret. To my great delight—I ought, I believe, to beg pardon for my want of gallantry and compassion—Mrs. Nubley was seriously afflicted with tooth-ache, which kept her *hors de combat* in her room, as soon as ever what

she called “the evening cold—he ! he ! he !”—came on ; a circumstance which reminded me of a letter I had recently seen from a very gallant officer, a son of one of my earliest friends, who, having been shot through both cheeks just under the ear, wrote to his father that he had received a severe wound, which rendered him a living anomaly, inasmuch as whenever “he wanted to speak, he was obliged to *hold his jaw.*” This term, applied to a lady, *might* sound coarse ; but I admit the absence of what I called Mrs. Nubley’s “peahenism” afforded me a delightful relief.

There is, however, a time for all things. Harriet looks tired—dear girl, it is quite natural she should ; I am only too happy she has borne up so well.

“ Come, dearest,” say I, “ lean upon my arm —let me lead you to your room.”

“ Thanks, Gilbert,” says the good, kind-hearted girl.

She leans upon my arm—her father kisses her, and gives me a look which indicates—“as

Fanny is to sleep here—let us have some brandy and water, clerically weak but comfortably hot, before I start;” for Wells is a man who prefers the comfort of his servants and his horses to his own, and means to walk down to the Rectory to-night. I nod and telegraph him to ring the bell, whereupon Fanny says—

“ Oh ! Harriet, I am coming too.”

Whereunto I reply—“ You have no candle.”

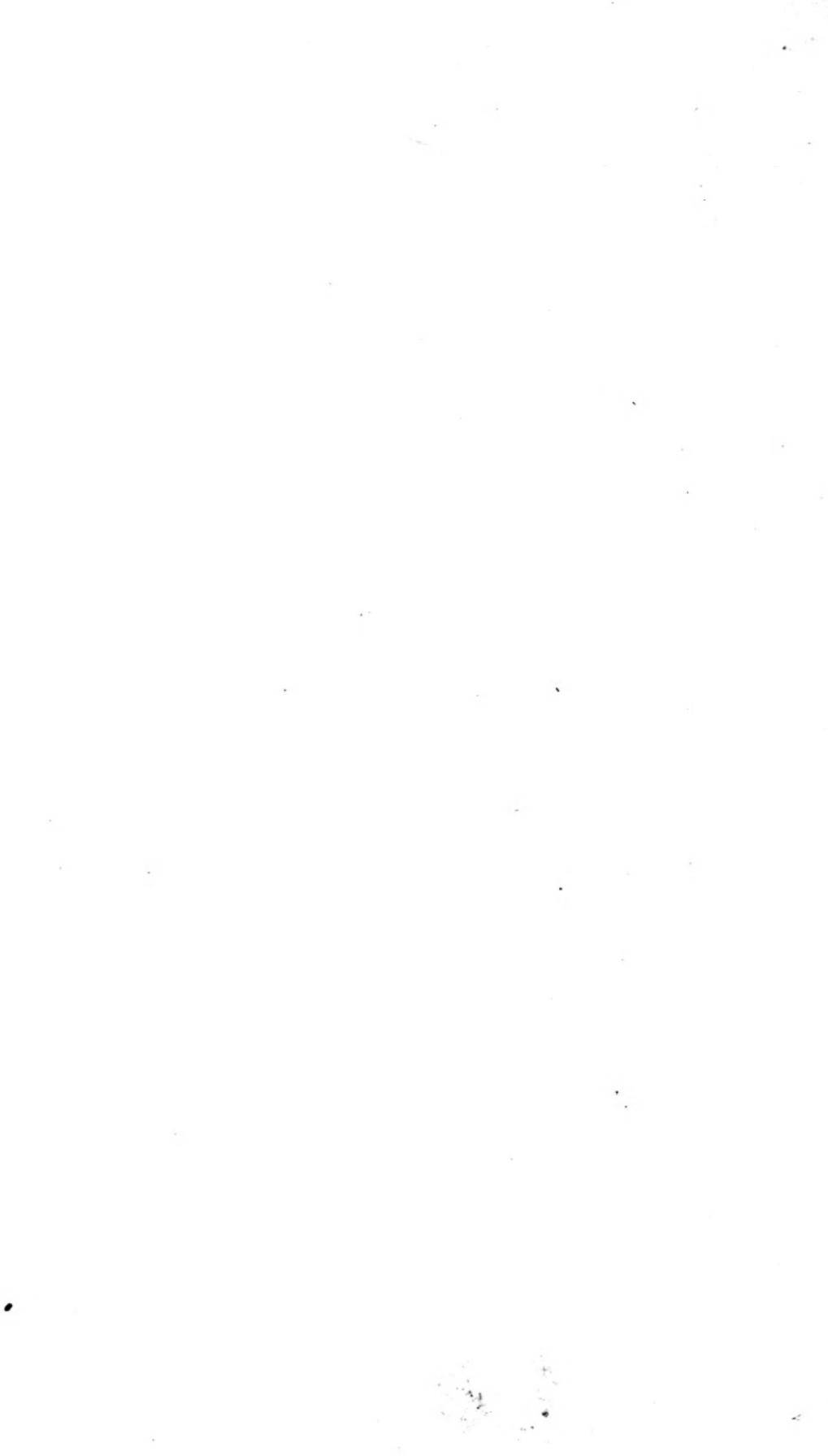
I take my Harriet to the door of her room, where Foxcroft is waiting for her, and I give her a kiss—a parting one—for the present.

So far so good; then I return to Wells, and, as he *will* have a glass—or it may be two, as it is “ cold exceedingly”—I *must* join him. The compulsion is not so painful.

It begins to snow; he cannot well go till it holds up.

END OF VOL. II.







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